



LABOR & ECONOMIC
ANALYSIS DIVISION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESESEARCH MANUAL

Introduction

LEAD has created this Research Manual to help our partners across the state find the data and resources they need as quickly and easily as possible. And, there is certainly a lot of data out there. In the past, it used to be that collecting data was a real challenge, but now with so many sources of information, it's almost the opposite problem: information overload.

As a result, we've put this guide together to highlight some of the "best" and most useful resources we use on a regular basis. While we would love to create a comprehensive list and explanation of all the available economic data resources out there, we concede that that exercise would be an overwhelming task. Instead, by highlighting some of the most useful sources for research and data, and by updating and enhancing this manual on a regular basis, we hope that this guide becomes a valuable tool for you.

How to Use This Guide

We've organized this guide by category, and the Table of Contents at the front reflects that. So, for example, if you're looking for data identifying businesses in your community, go to the Businesses and Industry section.

We've separated the data sources into several categories, listed and explained below:

- **Businesses & Industry:** (e.g., company directories, general industry data, specific industry data)
- **Energy & Utilities:** (e.g., energy, electricity, natural gas prices)
- **General Economic:** (e.g., regional economic conditions, gross state product, income, inflation)
- **Housing & Construction:** (e.g., housing permits, construction activity, and sales activity)
- **International:** (e.g., country profiles, foreign direct investment, international trade)
- **Social:** (e.g., education, crime, population and demographics, poverty)
- **State & Policy:** (e.g., taxes, incentives, licensing/permit requirements)
- **Transportation:** (e.g., air travel, commuting patterns)
- **Workforce** (e.g., wages, unemployment rates, union activity)

While we've done our best to categorize these in a way that makes the most sense, we realize that some categorizations are difficult (e.g., should data re: wage rates by industry be in Businesses & Industry or Workforce?). As a result, we've also included an A-Z Index in the back of this manual that sorts every category and topic alphabetically.

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LEAD's Top Data Requests and Questions

Before we get into the guide, we would like to highlight questions that LEAD gets on a very regular basis.

1. State and Local Unemployment Rates:

There are multiple places to find data related to the state and local unemployment rates:

Division of Employment Security (DES): For a simple snapshot of state and local unemployment rates, DES provides the most recent press releases and lists of rates at:

Website: www.ncesc1.com/PMI/rates/ratesmain.asp#county

LEAD's Demand Driven Data Delivery System (D4): D4 allows users to create customized data sets for unemployment data at the state, county, and subcounty levels. From the homepage, click on LAUS, then select the geography on the left (state, county, MSA), and the time periods (multiple periods can be selected by holding Ctrl and clicking on the time period). Then, choose Standard View (data appears below), or Download (create an Excel file).

Website: esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/

NCWorks is another option for finding unemployment data. Just follow the link and choose your region.

Website:

<http://www.ncworks.gov/saintro.asp?session=areadetail§ion=empunempinddata¶mx=faq>

2. Local Tax Rates—Property & Sales Tax

The NC Department of Revenue provides handy property and sales tax information on its website.

Website (Property Tax): www.dornc.com/taxes/property/rates.html

Website (Sales Tax): www.dornc.com/taxes/sales/taxrates.html

3. Wage Rates

The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) is the best source of information for wages, separated by industry and region. Both LEAD's D4 and ACCESSNC systems can get you the data.

For D4, from the homepage, first select "QCEW" on the top. Then, select your geography on the left, then your other parameters (e.g., industry, data, time period, etc.). Remember, you can make multiple selections by holding the Ctrl key and clicking the data or parameters you want. Then, either select View or Download (for an Excel file).

Website: <http://esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/>

ACCESSNC provides the same QCEW data, but just in a different format. Click on Community Demographics, then on Custom Reports for County, Regional or State. Double click the + sign to open Employment and Occupation, and then, again, Industry Average Annual Wages, all the way down to checking the box(es) for the exact data you need.

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

NCWorks is another handy resource for wage and occupation data.

Website: http://www.ncworks.gov/analyzer/session/session.asp?cat=HST_EMP_WAGE

4. Other States' Tax Rates

Another common question regards comparisons of tax rates across states. While the sources below can be helpful in answering general and some specific questions about other states' taxes, it's important to remember that the devil is always in the details on taxes, and there may be specific and local issues that these sources don't always take into account. As a result, it's generally a good idea to double check the information by finding the website for the taxing authority in the state you're researching.

The Federation of Tax Administrators provides corporate, franchise, sales, and income rates for all states.

Website: www.taxadmin.org/fta/rate/tax_stru.html

The Tax Foundation provides a variety of resources and reports on cross-state comparisons of tax rates.

Website: taxfoundation.org/tax-topics/state-tax-and-spending-policy

The Council on State Taxation is also a good resource, and with Ernst & Young, it produces an annual report on tax burdens across states.

Website: www.cost.org/Page.aspx?id=69654

Businesses & Industry

There are many sources of data, research, and support services related to business and industry. Below is just a snapshot of some of the resources LEAD uses on a regular basis, organized into the following format:

- Company Lists and Directories
- Company Briefs, Reports, and Filings
- Industry Data (General)
- Industry Data (Specific Industries)
- Other Business Data
- Small Business

COMPANY LISTS AND DIRECTORIES

One common request we get at LEAD is for lists of companies in a certain area, or with certain characteristics. While there are several sources for this type of information, we must note that sometimes the data are not completely reliable. While the companies that create these lists go to great lengths (and costs) to identify companies and report accurate information on them, the fact is that with different collection methodologies, the results can be varied. With that said, here are some options for generating lists of businesses.

BUSINESS SEARCH (ACCESSNC)

ACCESSNC provides a good search mechanism to find companies based on name, location, and other criteria. From the link below, click on the "Business Search" tab on the top, then either "NC Quick Search" or "Advanced Search." One limitation is that the data provider only allows searching at the 4-digit NAICS level.

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/business.html

BUSINESS SEARCH (INTELLECT VIA NC LIVE)

Another popular business directory is Intellect (a business line of Dun and Bradstreet). It provides a handy business directory called "Intellect," which is available through NCLive.org. However, to access the site you must have a library card from a participating NCLive partner (e.g., through the State Library). To access, just click on the link below and select "Intellect." Then, select your participating library and enter your ID number.

Website: www.nclive.org/browse/business

LARGEST EMPLOYERS (BY COUNTY AND STATE)

ACCESSNC provides the Top 25 Employers by county. From the ACCESSNC homepage, click on "Business Data." "Top Employers" should be the default landing page. If not, it's the first tab at the top of the screen.

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

For the largest statewide employers, the Office of the State Controller provides a list in its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Just select the most recent report, and navigate to the list.

Website: www.ncosc.net/financial/

COMPANY BRIEFS, REPORTS AND FILINGS

ANNUAL REPORTS

Oftentimes, the best place to find a company's annual report is to just Google the company, find its Web page, and look for its most recent annual report there. If that doesn't work, here are a couple of other options:

PrecisionIR allows you to search by company name or industry for corporate annual reports. Hard copies of reports can be delivered by mail or email.

Website: wsjie.ar.wilink.com

AnnualReports.com is another option for annual reports. View company annual reports (and 10K reports if available) online or select companies to order hard copy reports.

Website: annualreports.com

COMPANY PROFILES

There are many different options for finding information on specific companies, some of which require subscription services and cost a lot of money. For free and less expensive sources, here are a couple options:

Bloomberg Businessweek provides good information in a fairly easy-to-understand layout. We've linked directly to the company search mechanism, but you can also Google the company name + Businessweek.

Website: investing.businessweek.com/research/common/symbollookup/symbollookup.asp

NCLive also connects to a source that provides company profiles. From the website below, select "Company Profiles." Then, enter the participating library and your ID number (the one catch with NCLive is that it's only available to those with a library card). Finally, just navigate or search for the company you're looking for.

Website: <https://www.nclive.org/browse/business>

SECURITIES FILINGS (SEC)

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission: All public companies, foreign and domestic, are required to file registration statements, periodic reports, and other forms electronically through the SEC's EDGAR filing management system. Anyone can access and download this information for free. Here you'll find links to a complete list of filings available through EDGAR and instructions for searching the EDGAR database.

Website: www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml

Note: Generally, the most informative filing is the 10-K, a company's annual filing which gives a comprehensive review of its financial performance. While sometimes a company's 10-K is similar to its "glossy" annual report (listed above), it is not the same, so when doing company research, it's best to look at both the Annual Report and the 10-K.

Also, while EDGAR is the official document repository for the SEC, it can be challenging to navigate, especially since it has vast amounts of filings and data. As an alternative, most good finance websites that provide stock quotes and market information, often provide direct links to important SEC filings, like 10-Ks. Bloomberg Businessweek is relatively simple to use; just search for the company, then "Financials," then "SEC Filings."

Website: investing.businessweek.com/research/common/symbollookup/symbollookup.asp

STATE CORPORATE FILINGS

The North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State's Corporation Division's website provides information on forming a North Carolina corporation. Forms, fee schedules, and instructions on incorporation are available for printing at this site. This site also provides a search feature to find information and filings related to North Carolina business entities. The department's number is 919-807-2225.

Website: www.secretary.state.nc.us/Corporations/

INDUSTRY DATA (GENERAL)

We won't even touch the surface of all the sources for industry data, but here are a few good places to start:

ANNUAL SURVEY OF MANUFACTURERS (U.S. CENSUS BUREAU)

The Annual Survey of Manufacturers provides detailed data about the manufacturing industry including employees, payroll, inputs, and production for manufacturing industry (NAICS codes 31-33). The survey provides state-level data, along with national data.

Website: www.census.gov/manufacturing/asm/index.html

ECONOMIC CENSUS (U.S. CENSUS BUREAU)

The Economic Census is the U.S. Government's official five-year measure of American business and the economy. It is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, and response is required by law. These reports serve as a major source of facts about the structure and functioning of the nation's economy.

Website: www.census.gov/econ/census/

INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION (NORTH AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM–NAICS)

One of the most important parts of any industry research is determining how industries are classified. Most industry data are now organized by NAICS code, although some sources still use Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes. The Census Bureau and a private website both offer helpful resources for looking up NAICS codes and how they're used:

Website: www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/

Website: www.naics.com/search.htm

QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES (VIA LEAD'S D4)

QCEW can be a good place to start if you're looking for general data on the number of establishments or employees in a region broken out by industry. LEAD's D4 system provides a simple way to create customized data. From the link below, select the geographic region you want to look at on the left, then all your other parameters (industry level, specific industry, time, etc.) in the middle. Just a reminder, you can make multiple selections by holding down the Ctrl button on your keyboard while you click. Then, select "View" or "Download" depending on how you want to see the data.

Website: esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/QCEWSelection.aspx

QCEW data are also available via ACCESSNC, and for other states and nationally at the U.S. Department of Labor (although the US DOL site can be a bit complicated to use at times).

Website: www.bls.gov/cew/

INDUSTRY DATA (SPECIFIC INDUSTRIES)

Again, there are data and research about nearly every industry imaginable, but here are a couple industries of note:

INDUSTRY REPORTS (LEAD)

LEAD produces industry specific reports from time to time, including a recent one on the impact of the military on the North Carolina economy.

Website: www.nccommerce.com/lead/research-publications/special-reports/industry-research

INDUSTRY PROFILES (DUKE)

Duke University's "North Carolina in the Global Economy" produces detailed information and reports on seven of the top industries in North Carolina. Please note that these reports might be a bit dated, although some of the historical information is certainly helpful and relevant.

Website: www.soc.duke.edu/NC_GlobalEconomy/index.shtml

AGRICULTURE

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services provides a variety of resources regarding the agricultural industry in North Carolina. Of particular note is its comprehensive Annual Statistics Book.

Website: www.ncagr.gov/stats/index.htm

BANKS

Banking regulation is complicated, so finding data on the banking industry can be complicated, as well. But here are some options:

The North Carolina Commissioner of Banks regulates state-chartered banks. It provides a variety of research and reports on banking in the state.

Website: www.nccob.org/Public/news/nrpubandresearch.aspx

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) is another one of the major national bank regulators. Among other things, it provides detailed statistics on FDIC-regulated depository institutions by state.

Website: www2.fdic.gov/SDI/SOB/

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) is another major bank regulator, and it has useful data and research reports as well.

Website: www.occ.gov/

BIOTECHNOLOGY

The North Carolina Biotechnology Center has a variety of resources and information on the biotech industry in the state. We've linked to its research library below:

Website: www.ncbiotech.org/resource-library

MILITARY

While not an "industry" in the narrow sense of the word, the military certainly has an enormous economic impact on the nation and the state.

The North Carolina Military Business Center's (NCMBC) primary goal is to help existing businesses identify, bid on and win military and other federal contracts. The NCMBC maintains a searchable, historical database of transitioning military personnel to help economic developers quantify this potential workforce for businesses locating in North Carolina. The NCMBC conducted a strategic Gap Analysis study to identify strategic priorities, target lucrative defense industry sectors, and identify specific target companies for economic developers to recruit and locate in North Carolina.

Website: www.ncmbc.us/index.php

MatchForce links businesses to government contracts, government purchasers to North Carolina suppliers, and job seekers to North Carolina jobs. Businesses, contracting officers, cardholders, and job seekers can register, post, search, and receive opportunities.

Website: www.matchforce.org/

The U.S. Department of Defense provided a quick-reference listing of the top DOD sites with direct access to the databases of all registered DOD sites

Website: www.defense.gov/RegisteredSites/RegisteredSites.aspx

LEAD also recently completed a review of the economic impact of the military in the state.

Website: www.nccommerce.com/lead/research-publications/special-reports/industry-research

MILITARY & GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING

While it includes more than just military contracting, USASpending.gov provides a variety of tools to search for the DOD and other federal contracting opportunities, along with historical data. Start at the search/data page:

Website: www.usaspending.gov/trends

TRAVEL & TOURISM

The North Carolina Department of Commerce's Tourism Division provides several measures of the tourism industry in North Carolina.

Website: www.nccommerce.com/tourism/research

Of particular note, the Department offers tourism data broken up by county and year:

Website: www.nccommerce.com/tourism/research/economic-impact/teim

SMALL BUSINESS

SMALL BUSINESS (GENERAL)

The Small Business Technology Development Center provides a variety of resources and data for small business owners, and its research staff is very helpful answering any questions about small business. They can be reached at 800-258-0862 or locally at 919-715-7272.

Website: www.sbtcd.org/services/research/

The federal Small Business Administration provides data on business size and dynamics broken out by national, state, and substate:

Website: www.sba.gov/advocacy/849/12162

SBA provides a handy state summary for North Carolina. The most recent 2012 edition is linked below.

Website: www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/nc12.pdf

SBA also provides a list of data sources that might be useful for those starting or working in a small business:

Website: www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/starting-managing-business/starting-business/establishing-business/business-data-statistics

SBIR/STTR AWARDS

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grants are highly competitive grants focused on small business R&D. Data on past awards, searchable by state and company, can be found at the website below:

Website: www.sbir.gov/past-awards

VENTURE CAPITAL

PricewaterhouseCoopers and the National Venture Capital Association provide quarterly data, broken up by state, on venture capital investment activity in the U.S.

Website: <https://www.pwcmoneytree.com/MTPublic/ns/index.jsp>

OTHER BUSINESS DATA

LICENSING (REQUIREMENTS FOR BUSINESSES)

Business Link North Carolina (BLNC) contains information on licensing and regulations questions. You can also search the business license and permit database for North Carolina. Business counselors from BLNC are available at 1-800-228-8443.

Website: www.blnc.gov/start-your-business/business-licenses-permits

NEW BUSINESS STARTS AND FAILURES (BUSINESS DYNAMICS)

The Small Business Administration (via the Census Bureau) provides a lot of data on businesses, including data related to new business stats and failures.

Website: www.sba.gov/advocacy/849/12162

Note: This website contains a lot of data sets and can be a bit overwhelming. For the state level (and even county and Metropolitan Statistical Area level) data, look for the “State, MSA & County dynamic data” under “Statistics of U.S. Businesses.” Also, “State Data” under “Business Dynamics Statistics” might be helpful.

WORKER SAFETY (OSHA)

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides several options for finding data related to its inspections and accident investigations.

Website: <https://www.osha.gov/oshstats/index.html>

The North Carolina Department of Labor has a Bureau of Consultative Services that provides free, confidential consultative services to companies that are in need of instruction or improvement in their OSHA compliance activities. This service is available to private companies with 500 or fewer employees nationwide.

Website: www.nclabor.com/osha/consult/consult.htm

Energy & Utilities

ENERGY (GENERAL)

The State Energy Data System (SEDS) is the source of the U.S. Energy Information Administration’s (EIA) comprehensive state energy statistics. EIA’s goal in maintaining SEDS is to create historical time series of energy production, consumption, prices, and expenditures by state that are defined as consistently as possible over time and across sectors for analysis and forecasting purposes. There is a lot of data available, but here is a brief summary for North Carolina: www.eia.gov/state/analysis.cfm?sid=NC.

Website: www.eia.gov/state/seds/

The Division of Energy, Mineral, and Land Resources, which recently moved from Commerce to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, may be able to provide information and research regarding North Carolina-specific issues.

Website: www.energync.net/

ELECTRICITY

The Energy Information Administration, a division of the U.S. Department of Energy, provides data on average industrial, commercial and residential electric costs for all 50 states. While the first link below provides a ton of data regarding electricity production in the U.S., the second provides good, simple state-level energy profiles, including North Carolina:

Website (extensive): www.eia.gov/electricity/data.cfm

Website (state summaries): www.eia.gov/state/

NATURAL GAS

The Energy Information Administration is the place to go for data on average commercial, industrial and residential natural gas use and prices. The second link below takes you directly to data by state.

Website: www.eia.gov/naturalgas/

Website (prices by location): www.eia.gov/naturalgas/data.cfm#prices

UTILITIES REGULATION

The North Carolina Utilities Commission regulates the rates and services of all public utilities in North Carolina.

Website: www.ncuc.commerce.state.nc.us/

General Economic Information

This is the “catch-all” category for data and resources that aren’t quite workforce focused, not quite industry focused, and don’t really fit in any of the other categories either.

GROSS STATE PRODUCT

Gross domestic product is the total value of all final goods and services produced in the state and is often used as a gauge of economic health. GSP is produced by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and is also available for select metropolitan statistical areas.

Website: www.bea.gov/regional/index.htm

PRICES: CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which measures changes in prices of consumer goods and services. It is one of the key measures of inflation. The most recent data are found at:

Website: www.bls.gov/cpi/home.htm

Historical Data: <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpi.ai.txt>

BLS also produces regional CPI data, in which North Carolina is grouped with several other Southern states.

Website: www.bls.gov/regions/cpi.asp#NC

PRICES: PRODUCER PRICE INDEX (PPI)

The BLS also produces the Producer Price Index, which tracks prices at a wholesale or producer level. The most recent data are found at the following. PPI is only available at the national level.

Website: www.bls.gov/ppi/

PRICES: COST-OF-LIVING CALCULATORS

There are many different cost-of-living calculators available online. There is no real consensus on which one is the best. Sperling’s Best Places provides a simple and easy-to-use comparison tool. The comparison tool also breaks down the difference by category, including food, housing, utilities, transportation, and health cost of living numbers.

Website: www.bestplaces.net/cost-of-living/

REGIONAL BUSINESS CONDITIONS

The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond provides some good research and data covering economic issues affecting North Carolina and surrounding states. Of particular note, the Bank produces monthly snapshots of business conditions in North Carolina (along with South Carolina), plus regional surveys of business conditions in the Carolinas.

Website (Snapshots): https://www.richmondfed.org/research/regional_economy/reports/snapshot/

Website (Business Conditions):

www.richmondfed.org/research/regional_economy/surveys_of_business_conditions/index.cfm

In connection with the above, several times a year, the Federal Reserve Banks consolidate their views on the state of the economy in each bank region in what is known as the Beige Book, which can be a useful data source for regional business conditions around the country.

Website: www.federalreserve.gov/monetarypolicy/beigebook/

Wells Fargo also produces state-level economic reports for several states in which it has a significant presence, including North Carolina.

Website: <https://www.wellsfargo.com/com/insights/economics/regional-reports>

RETAIL SALES

The North Carolina Department of Revenue provides monthly and annual (fiscal year) sales and use tax reports separated by county.

Website (Monthly): www.dor.state.nc.us/publications/monthlysales.html

Website (Annual): www.dornc.com/publications/fiscalyearsales.html

ACCESSNC also provides retail sales data. Click on Community Demographics, then the tab for Custom Reports (either County, Regional, or State). Select your geography, then scroll down and double-click the + sign to open Commercial/Retail, then the same for Sales, then Total Sales or Average Sales. Then select your report format and click “Run Report.”

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

STATE RANKINGS AND COMPARISONS

ACCESSNC offers a quick and easy way to compare North Carolina against any other state. From the homepage, click on Community Demographics. Under Geographic Profiles, find State Profile at the bottom of the screen.

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

The State Data Center also produces comparative rankings for North Carolina across a variety of metrics including: Population & Housing, Vital Statistics & Health, Social & Human Services, Education, Law Enforcement, Courts & Corrections, Environment, Recreation & Resources, Energy & Utilities, Government, Employment & Income, Business & Industry, Agriculture, and Transportation.

Website: data.osbm.state.nc.us/staterank/state_rankings.pdf

WEATHER

The State Climate Office (SCO) provides climate-related services to the state, local and federal agencies, businesses and the citizens of North Carolina. Of particular note, the website provides some handy summaries of North Carolina’s climate and statewide maps.

Website: www.nc-climate.ncsu.edu/climate/ncclimate.html

The Southeast Regional Climate Center at UNC-Chapel Hills also has several helpful weather-related resources. Of note is a helpful map that provides historical climate data by city:

Website: www.sercc.com/climateinfo/historical/historical_nc.html

Housing & Construction

BUILDING PERMITS (RESIDENTIAL)

The U.S. Census Bureau provides data on building permits at several geographic levels including national, regional, state, MSA, and county. The data, however, is for residential only.

Website: www.census.gov/construction/bps/

HOME SALES & PRICES

Locally, the North Carolina Association of Realtors provides a monthly existing home sales report broken out by Multiple Listing Service regions.

Website: www.ncrealtors.com/market_statistics.cfm

The National Association of Realtors provides data both on pending and existing home sales, but they are only available at the regional level.

Website (Pending Sales): www.realtor.org/topics/pending-home-sales/data

Website (Existing Sales): www.realtor.org/topics/existing-home-sales/data

S&P/Case-Shiller is one of the most cited home price indices. While it does provide helpful information about housing trends, Charlotte is the only North Carolina market it specifically tracks.

Website: us.spindices.com/index-family/real-estate/sp-case-shiller

HOUSING & CONSTRUCTION (GENERAL)

The American Housing Survey, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, provides many, many different measures of housing across the country.

Website: www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/

The Census Bureau provides a handy list of construction data available by geography.

Website: www.census.gov/econ/construction.html

HOUSING VACANCY & HOMEOWNERSHIP

The U.S. Census Bureau provides housing vacancy and homeownership data, as well as characteristics of units available for occupancy. State and MSA-level data are available quarterly.

Website: www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/rates.html

International

COUNTRY PROFILES

The CIA World Factbook is a very good source of information on a variety of demographic, cultural, and economic issues for every country around the world.

Website: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

While there are many sources for current news, events, and trends around the globe, The Economist is one of the most reliable sources on international news and events. Some articles might require a subscription, but some are free. For country specific information, just browse for that country in the index linked below:

Website: www.economist.com/topics

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI)

Foreign Direct Investment is investment in an enterprise in a foreign country. Unfortunately, FDI data are only available at the national level, although it has been produced at the state level in the past. The Bureau of Economic Analysis produces this data.

Website: www.bea.gov/international/di1fdibal.htm

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The U.S. Census Bureau produces monthly international trade data, including data at the state level. While the Census Bureau produces the data, the US Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration provides a handy tool to find and organize the exact data you're looking for.

Website: tse.export.gov/TSE/TSEhome.aspx

Please note that export data at the state level can become a bit complicated based on how the origin of the product is determined. In some cases, the exported product is credited to the state where shipment was consolidated and left the country, not necessarily where the product was actually produced. For example, that's why Louisiana shows such an incredibly high export number for agricultural products — not because Louisiana produces all those agricultural products, but because all the shipments of agricultural products from the Great Plains come down the Mississippi River and exit the country from the Port of New Orleans. More on state-level export data can be found at the following:

Website: www.census.gov/foreign-trade/aip/elom.html

The International Trade Division in the Department of Commerce also has resources and tools that can help North Carolina businesses looking to export.

Website: www.nccommerce.com/trade

Social

CENSUS DATA

The US Census Bureau provides incredible amounts of data from the national level all the way down to neighborhoods. In addition to population data, there is business and economic data. Currently, results from the 2010 decennial census are available.

Website: <http://www.census.gov/>

QuickFacts tables are summary profiles showing frequently requested data items from various Census Bureau programs. The link below takes you directly to North Carolina data.

Website: quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37000.html

American FactFinder provides quick access to relevant data — just type in the geography you want to examine, and select the data you want.

Website: <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides data every year, giving communities the current information they need to plan investments and services.

Website: <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

LEAD's own ACCESSNC is another way to obtain Census data. Categories include education, housing, income, population, quality of life, taxes, commercial retail, and consumer expenditures. To retrieve data from the ACCESSNC homepage, first click on Community Demographics, then the geography you want to look at by selecting the appropriate tab (Custom County, Region, or State). Next, double click each + sign down to the data you want, select the report format, and finally "Run Report."

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

CRIME

The NC Department of Justice provides statistics compiled by the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI).

Website: crimereporting.ncdoj.gov/

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has compilations of crime statistics for all 50 states as published by the FBI.

Website: www.fbi.gov/stats-services/crimestats

ACCESSNC is another way to obtain crime statistics by state and by county. To retrieve data from the ACCESSNC homepage, first click on Community Demographics. Then, select the geography you want to look at by choosing the appropriate tab (Custom County, Region, or State). Next, double click each + sign under the "Crime" category down to the data you want, select the report format, and finally "Run Report."

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

EDUCATION

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas.

Website: nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/

NC Public Schools provides a great deal of information on North Carolina public schools available on the Department of Public Instruction website. Find Data and Statistics, Testing and Accountability Results, and Current and Historical SAT Scores by County.

Website: www.ncpublicschools.org

The Division of Non-Public Education of the North Carolina Department of Administration provides resources and statistics for home schools and private schools.

Website: www.ncdnpe.org/

NC Community College System provides a variety of resources, data, and information related to North Carolina's community colleges.

Website: www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/

UNC System: the reports and publications page, which includes information on enrollment, and other information, is linked below. Of note, the most recent [Statistical Abstract of Higher Education in North Carolina](#) might be a particularly useful resource.

Website: www.northcarolina.edu/reports/index.php

INCOME

BEARFACTS is the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Regional Fact Sheet about an area's personal income and gross domestic product. Data are available at the state, county, and MSA level.

Website: www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/

ACCESSNC also provides a variety of income measures at the state and county levels. To retrieve data from the ACCESSNC homepage, first click on Community Demographics. Then, select the geography you want to look at by choosing the appropriate tab (Custom County, Region, or State). Next, double click each + sign under the "Income" category to the data you want, select the report format, and finally "Run Report."

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

POPULATION, MIGRATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

The Office of State Budget and Management provides current and historical state, county, and municipal population estimates and future projections.

Website: demog.state.nc.us/

QuickFacts, from the U.S. Census Bureau, also provides a quick and easy way to pull population and demographic data for the state, counties, and cities.

Website: quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37000.html

ACCESSNC also provides tools to pull population data. To obtain data from the ACCESSNC homepage, first click on Community Demographics. Then, select the geography you want to look at by selecting the appropriate tab (Custom County, Region, or State). Next, double click each + sign under the “Population” category to the data you want, select the report format, and finally “Run Report.”

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

POVERTY RATES

The Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) are produced for school districts, counties, and states. The main objective of this program is to provide updated estimates of income and poverty statistics for the administration of federal programs and the allocation of federal funds to local jurisdictions.

Website: www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/data/interactive/#

ACCESSNC also provides data on poverty at the state and county levels. From the ACCESSNC homepage, first click on Community Demographics. Then, select the geography you want to look at by choosing the appropriate tab (Custom County, Region, or State). Next, double click each + sign under the “Income,” then “Poverty” categories to the data you want, select the report format, and finally “Run Report.”

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

State Government & Policy

BOND RATINGS

There are three major ratings agencies: Fitch, Moody’s, and S&P. Each offers information on borrowing ratings and on specific bond issues. The websites may require registration for access.

Website (Fitch): <https://www.fitchratings.com/web/en/dynamic/fitch-home.jsp>

Website (Moody’s): <https://www.moody.com/>

Website (S&P): www.standardandpoors.com/en_US/web/guest/home

The NC Treasurer’s Office also provides information on the state’s bond rating, along with information about state and local debt.

Website: www.nctreasurer.com/slg/Pages/Local-Debt.aspx

COUNTY TIER DESIGNATIONS

The North Carolina Department of Commerce annually ranks the state’s 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a County Tier Designation.

Website: www.nccommerce.com/research-publications/incentive-reports/county-tier-designations

ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING

The North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources offers an Express Permit review process for a number of environmental permits required for development including local contacts.

Website: www.envhelp.org/pages/onestop_permit.html

INCENTIVES

Thrive in North Carolina provides information on financial incentives available in the state.

Website: www.thrivenc.com/incentives/financial

The Department of Revenue provides data on the use of specific economic incentives. The 2014 report is linked here:

Website: www.dor.state.nc.us/publications/incentives/2014/index.html

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS (INDIVIDUALS)

LEAD provides information about licenses for careers in North Carolina, including licensing authority and requirements, and license and exam fees.

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/NCDOC/EDISviewer/EDISviewer/dem_bus/occ2.html

TAXES

Questions about taxes are one of the most frequent questions we get at LEAD. While there are many resources out there that can help answer questions about both North Carolina taxes, and how our state compares to others, here are what we think are the most helpful resources:

The North Carolina Department of Revenue has all the information you would ever need on taxes in North Carolina. Here's our top DOR links to get the data you need:

- **General Research & Publications:** www.dor.state.nc.us/publications/
- **Property Tax Rates:** www.dor.state.nc.us/taxes/property/rates.html
- **Sales Tax Rates:** www.dornc.com/taxes/sales/taxrates.html
- **Incentives:** www.dor.state.nc.us/publications/incentives/2013/index.html

The Federation of Tax Administrators provides corporate, franchise, sales and income rates for all states.

Website: www.taxadmin.org/fta/rate/tax_stru.html

The Tax Foundation provides a variety of resources and reports on cross-state comparisons of tax rates.

Website: taxfoundation.org/tax-topics/state-tax-and-spending-policy

The Council on State Taxation is also a good resource, and with Ernst & Young, it produces an annual report on tax burdens across states.

Website: www.cost.org/Page.aspx?id=69654

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The NC Rate Bureau provides services and programs for the insurance industry in North Carolina for automobile, property, and workers compensation.

Website: www.ncrb.org/ncrb/

Another source is the Workers' Compensation Research Institute's Detailed Benchmark/Evaluation (DBE) Database.

Website: www.wcrinet.org/benchmarks.html

The state of Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services provides a handy guide of workers' comp rates by state.

Website: www4.cbs.state.or.us/ex/imd/external/reports/index.cfm?fuseaction=dir&ItemID=1992

Transportation

AIR TRAVEL—DEPLANEMENTS AND ENPLANEMENTS

The Tourism Division at Commerce tracks monthly air travel statistics for the state.

Website: www.nccommerce.com/tourism/research/visitation-research/travel-tracker

COMMUTING PATTERNS

OnTheMap contains the most recent commuting patterns for local areas. The source of commuting data is The Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program. The LEHD program produces new, cost effective, public-use information combining federal, state and Census Bureau data on employers and employees under the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Partnership.

Website: lehmap3.did.census.gov/

TRANSPORTATION (GENERAL)

The North Carolina Department of Transportation provides various resources related to transportation in the state. The Newsroom page, linked below, may have some useful data, facts, and maps.

Website: www.ncdot.gov/newsroom/

Workforce

LABOR FORCE

The Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program provides labor force information along with unemployment data. The easiest way to access that data is through LEAD's D4 system. Simply choose your geography on the left, select the data and time periods in the center (remember, you can make multiple selections by holding down the Ctrl button while clicking), then select either Standard or Data Table View, or Download.

Website: esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/LausSelection.aspx

The same data, along with other states and geographies, are located at the BLS site.

Website: www.bls.gov/lau/

NCWorks also provides handy labor market information. From the homepage, click on "Labor Market Analysis" on the left side.

Website: <https://www.ncworks.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>

LAYOFFS AND CLOSINGS

Due to the federal sequester legislation, the Mass Layoff Statistics program, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, has been eliminated. The program had collected reports on mass layoff actions that resulted in workers being separated from their jobs. Historical data are available at the following.

Website: www.bls.gov/mls/

In addition, the NC Department of Commerce discontinued support for the collection and publication of Announced Business Closings and Layoffs effective May 2013. Archived data can be found using the D4 system.

Website: esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/AnnounceSelection.aspx

The NC Department of Commerce continues to provide data related to mass layoffs and plant closings through its Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) system.

Website: www.nccommerce.com/workforce/businesses/warn-information

OCCUPATION CLASSIFICATION (STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION)

Standard Occupational Classifications, or SOC codes, are the primary method to categorize occupations. Information and a handy look-up tool are provided by BLS at the following:

Website: www.bls.gov/soc/

QUARTERLY WORKFORCE INDICATORS (LONGITUDINAL EMPLOYER-HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS)

The Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) provides local labor market statistics by industry, worker demographics, an establishment's age and size, and is part of the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program of the Center for Economic Studies at the U.S. Census Bureau. From these data, the program creates statistics on employment, earnings, and job flows at detailed levels of geography and industry and for different demographic groups. In addition, the LEHD program uses these data to create partially synthetic data on workers' residential patterns. There's also a handy extraction tool for creating customized data that can be downloaded.

Website: lehd.ces.census.gov/applications/qwi_online/

Website (Extraction tool): ledextract.ces.census.gov/

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (LOCAL AREA UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS "LAUS")

There are multiple ways to access state and local unemployment rates.

The Division of Employment Security (DES) provides the simplest way to find unemployment rates by county:

Website: www.ncesc1.com/PMI/rates/ratesmain.asp#county

Another option, especially if you want to download the data into a spreadsheet, is to use LEAD's D4. D4 allows users to create customized data sets for unemployment data at the state, county, and subcounty levels. Click on LAUS, then select your region on the left (state, county, MSA), and your year and time periods (multiple periods can be selected by holding down Ctrl and clicking on the time period). Then, select Standard View or Download to get your data.

Website: esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/

For other states, and substate areas, the Bureau of Labor Statistics offers several tools for accessing unemployment rates.

Website: www.bls.gov/lau/

NCWorks is another option for finding unemployment data. Just follow the link and choose your region:

Website:

<http://www.ncworks.gov/saintro.asp?session=areadetail§ion=empunempinddata¶mx=faq>

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

The North Carolina Department of Commerce's Division of Employment Security provides information about Unemployment Insurance activities in North Carolina.

Website (Home Page): <http://www.ncesc1.com>

Website (General Information): www.ncesc1.com/main/faqmain.asp#EmployerTax

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration provides revenues and covered employment for all states. Revenues divided by covered employment derive the average annual cost per employee.

Website: ows.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data.asp

UNIONS

The Union Membership and Coverage Database is an Internet data resource providing private and public sector labor union membership, coverage, and density estimates compiled from the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Website: www.unionstats.com/

The National Labor Relations Board is an independent federal agency vested with the power to safeguard employees' rights to organize and to determine whether to have unions as their bargaining representative. The agency also acts to prevent and remedy unfair labor practices committed by private sector employers and unions. The regional office is located in Winston-Salem and the phone number is (336) 631-5201.

Website: www.nlr.gov/

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation Inc. provides a useful map of states and their “right-to-work” status.

Website: www.nrtw.org/rtws.htm

WAGES (BY INDUSTRY–QCEW)

The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) is the best source of information on wages, separated by industry. Both LEAD’s D4 and ACCESSNC systems can provide the data.

For D4, from the homepage, first select “QCEW” on the top. Then, select your geography on the left, then your other parameters (e.g., industry, data, time period, etc.). Remember, you can make multiple selections by holding down the Ctrl key and clicking the data or parameters you want. Then, either select View or Download (for an Excel file).

Website: esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/

ACCESSNC provides the same QCEW data, but just in a different format. Click on Community Demographics, then on Custom Reports for County, Regional or State. Double click the + sign to open Employment and Occupation, and then, again, Industry Average Annual Wages, all the way down to checking the box(es) for the exact data you need.

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

NCWorks is another option for both QCEW data and other labor market information by industry.

Website: https://www.ncworks.gov/analyzer/session/session.asp?cat=HST_EMP_WAGE_IND

WAGES (BY OCCUPATION–OES)

The Occupational Employment and Wages program is the best source of information on wages separated by occupation. D4 is one of the best ways to access the data. From the link below, just select the geography on the left, then the occupation and time period in the middle (reminder: you can make multiple selections by holding down the Ctrl key and clicking). Then, either View or Download the data. Please note that OES data is not a time series, and may not be useful for comparing one time period against another. Don’t hesitate to contact LEAD if you have any questions on how to use this data.

Website: esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/OESSelection.aspx

NCWorks is another good option for finding OES data.

Website: https://www.ncworks.gov/analyzer/session/session.asp?cat=HST_EMP_WAGE_OCC

Experts on the North Carolina Economy

While LEAD strives to be one of the best sources of information on the North Carolina economy, there are many other people around the state who have vast expertise in examining general economic conditions in the state, and particular industries and issues.

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Mike Walden

Tel: (919) 515-4671

Email: Michael_Walden@ncsu.edu

Website: ag-econ.ncsu.edu/person/michael-l-walden-ph-d

Area of Expertise: Consumer Economics, Regional Economics and Public Policy

Tom Grennes

Tel: (919) 513-2881

Email: tom_grennes@ncsu.edu

Website: ag-econ.ncsu.edu/person/thomas-j-grennes-m

Areas of Expertise: International and Monetary Economics

UNC-CHAPEL HILL

Patrick Conway

Tel: (919) 966-5376

Email: patrick_conway@unc.edu

Website: www.unc.edu/~pconway/

Areas of Expertise: International Economics and Economic Development

Roberto Quercia (Department of City & Regional Planning)

Tel: (919) 962-4766

Email: quercia@email.unc.edu

Website: planning.unc.edu/people/faculty/robertoquercia

Areas of Expertise: Low-Income Homeownership, Affordable Lending, Homeownership Education and Counseling.

Robert Connolly (Kenan Flagler Business School)

Tel: (919) 962-0053

Email: Robert_Connolly@kenan-flagler.unc.edu

Website: public.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/faculty/connolly/

Areas of Expertise: International Economics, International Finance, Globalization in the US South

E. Brent Lane (Center for Competitive Economies)

Tel: (919) 962-8871

Email: brent_lane@unc.edu

Website: www.kenaninstitute.unc.edu/news/brentLane.htm

Areas of Expertise: Economic Development

UNC-CHARLOTTE

Dr. John Connaughton

Tel: (704) 687-4134

Email: jec@email.uncc.edu

Website: www.belkcollege.uncc.edu/forecast/

Areas of Expertise: Economic Impact Studies, Sports Economics, North Carolina Economy

UNC-GREENSBORO

Dr. Don Jud

Tel: (336) 294-3655

Email: juddon@uncg.edu

Website: www.uncg.edu/~juddon/

Areas of Expertise: Real Estate, Urban Economics

WELLS FARGO

Mark Vitner Managing Director, Senior Economist

Tel: (704) 383-5635

Website: <https://www.wellsfargo.com/com/insights/economics/annual-economic-outlook>

Areas of Expertise: US and Regional Economic Trends

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

Dr. Gary Shoesmith

Tel: (336) 758-5053

Email: shoesmgl@wfu.edu

Website: business.wfu.edu/apps/facprofiles.cfm?id=shoesmgl

Areas of Expertise: National and Regional Time-Series Forecasting, and Financial Market Microstructure, Crime Forecasting and Analysis.

LEAD's "Favorite" Sources for Data

We've put together our list of "favorite" sources that LEAD often uses to collect the data we need every day.

1. **ACCESSNC:** This is LEAD's one-stop-shop for North Carolina-focused economic, labor, business, and demographic data. It's referenced multiple times throughout this Research Guide and can be a very handy resource. LEAD also offers regular training sessions on using ACCESSNC, so please don't hesitate to contact us for more information.

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/page1.html

In addition, ACCESSNC provides a handy data source guide that explains where all the data comes from.

Website: accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/bibliography/Data_Sources_Guide.pdf

2. **LEAD's D4:** Another LEAD product, D4 is a great resource for finding North Carolina focused employment and industry data from the "big" Bureau of Labor Statistics programs. Again, we've highlighted D4 throughout this manual.

Website: esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/

3. **Census Bureau's American FactFinder:** The Census Bureau produces incredible amounts of data from the national level all the way down to the neighborhood level. There's so much data available that it can sometimes become overwhelming. But with some practice and patience, using Census Bureau data (and also understanding its limitations) can be very helpful in any research project.

Website: factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml

4. **Bureau of Labor Statistics:** While ACCESSNC and D4 are very helpful for pulling North Carolina-focused economic and workforce data, going direct to the BLS can be used to compare North Carolina to other states. While using BLS's data tools takes some getting used to, it can be an invaluable resource.

Website: www.bls.gov/

5. **St. Louis Federal Reserve's –FRED:** FRED can also be a good option for finding and collecting economic data, and many economists use it as their "go-to" source. FRED doesn't produce its own data, but aggregates it from many different sources. Much of its data have more of a national and international focus, but it does aggregate state-level data, too.

Website: (Homepage): research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/

Website: (NC Series): research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/categories/27315

Disclaimers

While it can be a challenge to find data, it can sometimes be an even greater challenge to understand where exactly the data came from, how it was collected, and what its limitations might be. It's a challenge we face every day: knowing "good" data from "bad" data.

While we would like to be able to explain every strength and weakness of every resource highlighted in this guide, we would fill volumes. We've done our best to include useful data that also meets that "good" data test, but always remember that data has its limitations. We've also tried to underscore some of the major limitations of the sources included here, but we don't strive to cover every potential issue. So, please, always keep that in mind, and please feel free to ask us any questions about how to use the data presented here, what limitations it might have, and what might be some alternative strategies. We're always happy to help.

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