

WORKFORCE & DEMOGRAPHICS BRIEF

Haywood County

Workforce, Demographics & Commuting

2024–2026 Data | Sources: U.S. Census Bureau ACS, NC Commerce LEAD, BLS LAUS

Unemployment Rate: Current & Trend

4.1%

Feb 2026 (latest)

Haywood County

3.0%

Dec 2025

seasonal low

3.8%

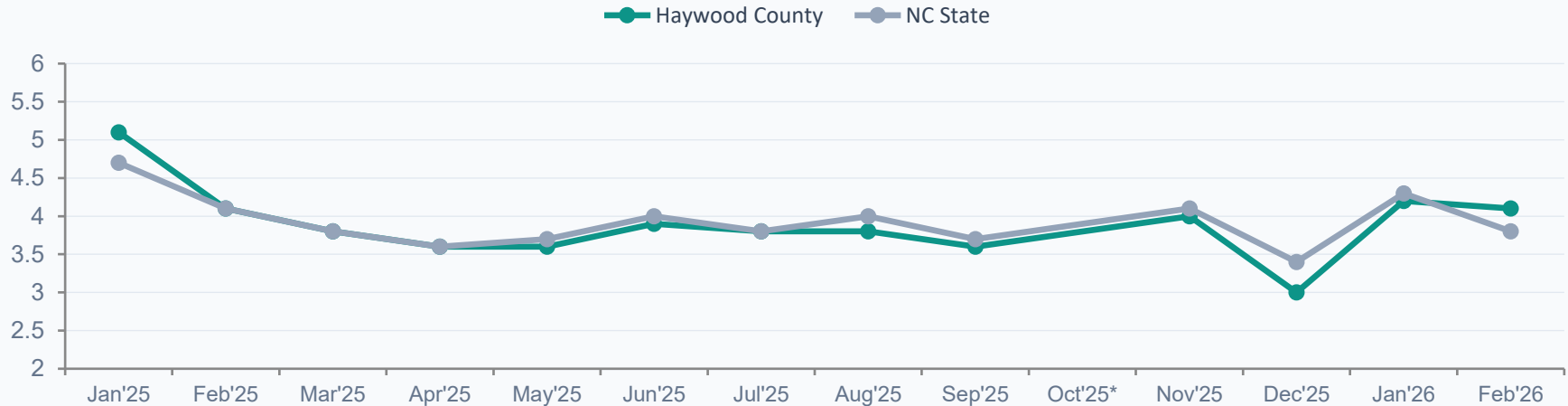
NC state rate

Feb 2026

4.4%

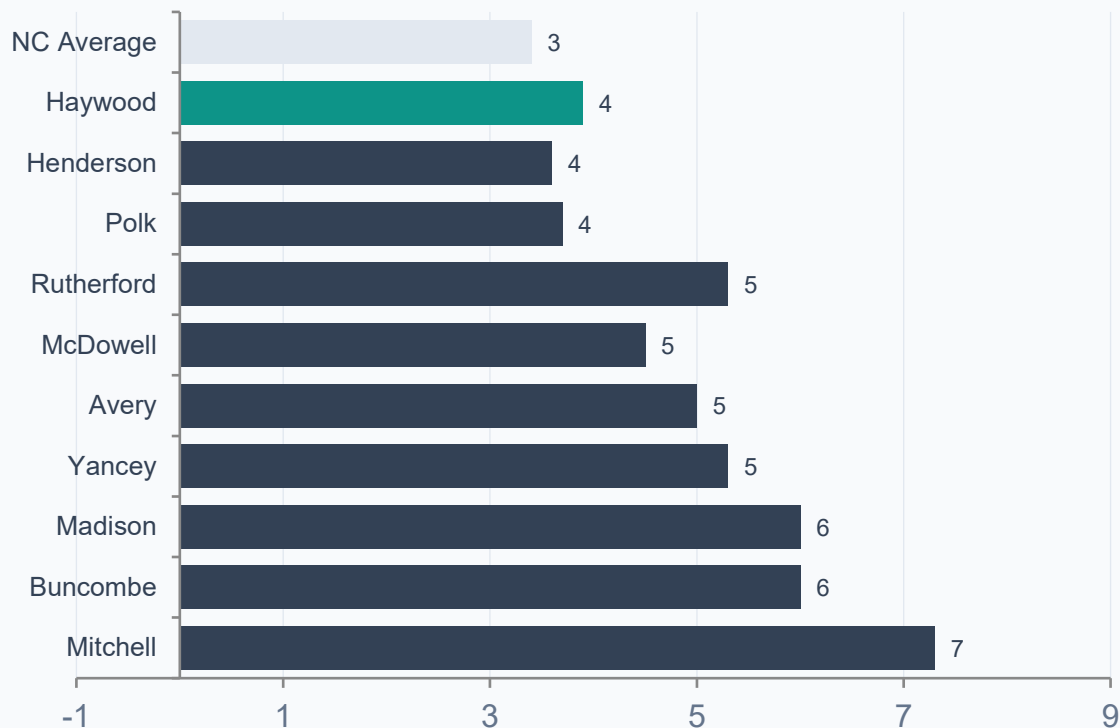
National rate

Feb 2026



* October 2025 data unavailable due to lapse in federal appropriations | Source: NC Commerce LEAD / BLS LAUS, not seasonally adjusted

Unemployment in Context: Helene Recovery



Helene impact — Dec 2024

Ten western NC counties saw unemployment rise ≥ 0.9 pts year-over-year after the storm. Haywood rose +1.1 pts to 3.9%, far above the state's +0.2 pt increase.

Recovery — Dec 2025

By December 2025, Haywood's rate had recovered to 3.0% — below the state average of 3.4% — reflecting a strong rebound in the county's labor market.

Feb 2026

Rate ticked up seasonally to 4.1% — typical winter pattern — while NC state is at 3.8%.

Demographics Snapshot

47.8 yrs

Median age
NC avg: 39.1

26.1%

65+ share
vs 16% nationally

17.3%

Under 18
of population

95.0%

White alone
2020 census

4.95%

Hispanic/Latino
~3,100 residents

2.76%

Foreign-born
vs 14% nationally

⚠ Aging demographic pressure: Haywood's median age of 47.8 is the 8th oldest among NC's 100 counties — 8.7 years above the state median. Over 42% of households have elderly residents vs. 30% statewide, creating both workforce constraints and service demand.

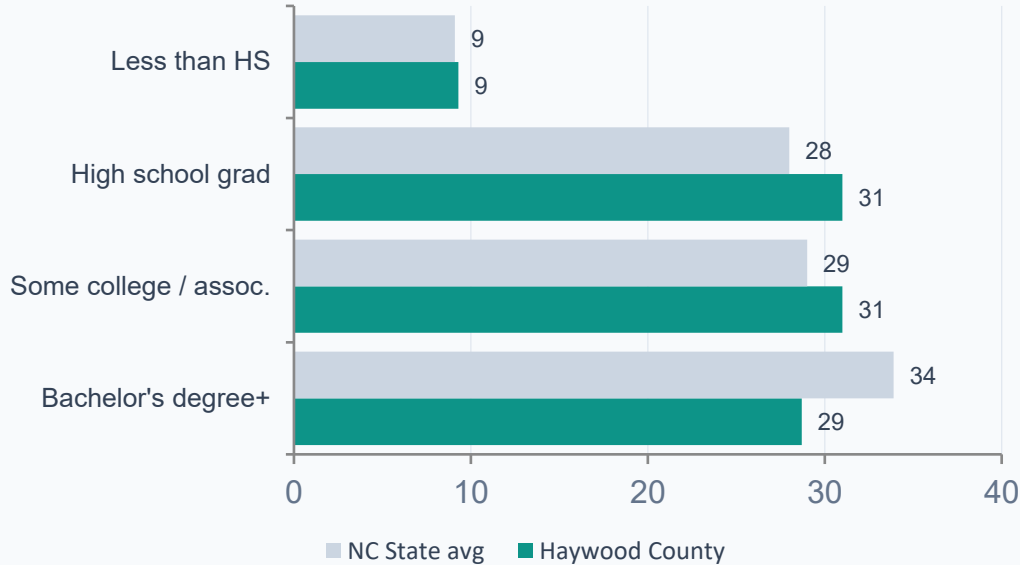
Income, Housing & Economy

Metric	Haywood County	NC Average
Median household income	\$61,912	~\$66,000
Per capita income	\$44,461	~\$42,000
Poverty rate	13.1%	12.5% (US)
Median property value	\$279,200	\$332,700 (US)
Homeownership rate	74.9%	65.2% (US)
Median property tax	\$20,314/yr	—
Uninsured rate (under 65)	12.2%	~11% (US)

Top industries by employment

Health Care & Social Assist.	4,195
Manufacturing	3,493
Retail Trade	3,391
Management Occupations	3,477
Sales & Related	2,748

Education & Workforce



Employed residents (2024) **28,690**

1-year employment growth **+1.45%**

Work from home (2024) **9.19%**

Avg commute time **23.8 min**

Drive alone to work **78.3%**

Carpool to work **9.08%**

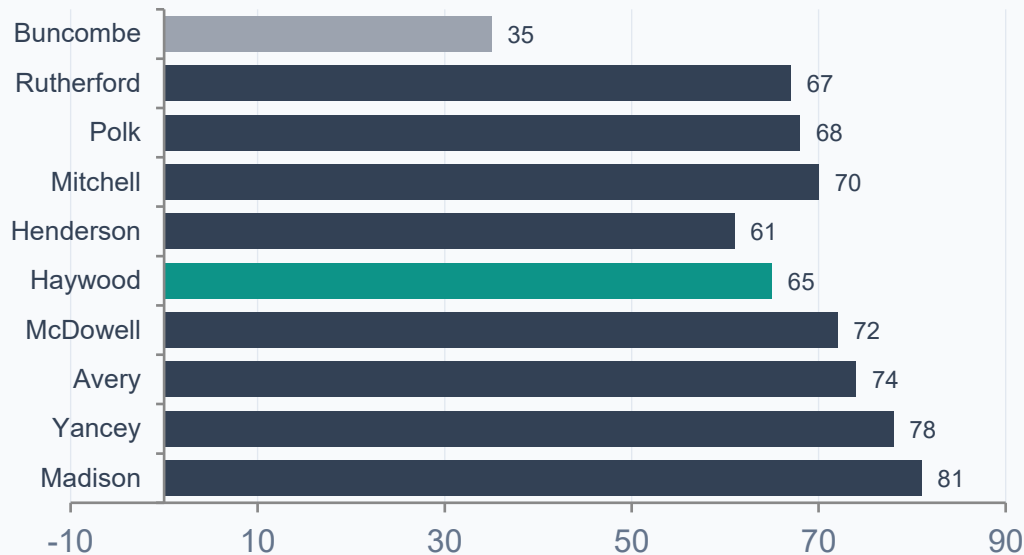
Bachelor's degree attainment is up from 23.1% a decade ago but remains below the NC state average of 33.9%.

Commuting Patterns & Out-of-County Work

~24%

Top destination: Buncombe County (Asheville)

25.8% of Haywood resident commuters work in Buncombe County — making Asheville a critical economic hub for Haywood workers.



Regional interdependence

NC Commerce data shows Haywood is NOT among the 12 NC counties where the majority of residents work locally. Only Buncombe County in the western region qualifies, with 65% working within county.

Helene vulnerability

Because so many Haywood residents work in other counties — especially Buncombe — Hurricane Helene's damage to the region disrupted employment even for workers whose homes were unaffected.

Key Takeaways

01

Unemployment recovering from Helene

After spiking to 5.1% in January 2025 post-Helene, Haywood's rate recovered to 3.0% by December 2025. The February 2026 rate of 4.1% reflects normal seasonal variation, not a new economic shock.

02

Aging population is a defining challenge

With a median age of 47.8 years and 26% of residents over 65, Haywood faces workforce supply constraints and elevated demand for health and elder care services unlike most NC counties.

03

Regional labor market dependency

Roughly 24% of workers commute out of county — with 25.8% of those going to Buncombe County. Economic conditions in Asheville directly impact Haywood's employment picture.

04

Strengths: homeownership, commute & income

Homeownership (74.9%) far exceeds national averages; commute times (23.8 min) are below state norms; and median household income (\$61,912) has grown steadily despite mill closure impacts.