



# RECESSION AND RECOVERY IN NORTH CAROLINA: A DATA SNAPSHOT, 2007-12

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The “Great Recession” has altered North Carolina’s labor market in unexpected ways. Three significant trends merit attention: (1) the severity of the economic downturn; (2) the slowness of the labor market recovery; and (3) the shift in the composition of the population of low-income and poor households.
- While the decline in real economic output between 2007 and 2009 was less severe in North Carolina than in the United States, the recovery in output that occurred between 2009 and 2011 was somewhat slower in North Carolina than in the nation. Employment trends also have proven much more volatile in North Carolina. Indeed, the most recent recession battered a labor market that had never fully recovered from the 2001 recession.
- A defining characteristic of the Great Recession relates to the widespread nature of job losses in North Carolina. Payroll employment levels have fallen since 2007 in almost every private industrial sector with the exceptions of education and health services and professional and business services. Of the major private sector industries with sizable levels of payroll employment, construction and manufacturing have contracted the most.
- A distinctive feature of the recession is that the labor market challenges have not been limited to specific demographic groups, though some have struggled much more than others. All demographic groups in North Carolina have experienced significant hardships. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an average of 8.3 percent of the White, non-Hispanic labor force was unemployed between 2008 and 2010, a period that encompasses the heart of the recession in North Carolina. The unemployment rate among African-American workers was 15.4 percent, while 12.4 percent of Hispanic workers were unemployed.
- While 2011 was the best year for net private sector job growth in some time (+41,500 jobs, +1.3 percent), growth still proved extremely weak in relation to a large job gap. Restrained growth has continued in 2012. Over the first half of the year, North Carolina’s private-sector payrolls netted 22,700 jobs (+0.6 percent) with the rate of growth decelerating between the first and second quarters of the year.
- Since late 2007, the share of North Carolinians with incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level has climbed. In 2010, the most recent year for which data are available, 35.4 percent of the state’s residents had incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level, with 17.5 percent of the population had incomes below the poverty threshold. Alarming, the 17.5 percent poverty rate posted in 2010 was the third-highest annual figure recorded since 1980 and the highest logged since 1982.

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## Recession and Recovery, 2007-12

The “Great Recession” has altered the North Carolina labor market in unexpected ways. Three significant trends merit our attention: (1) the severity of the economic downturn; (2) the slowness of the labor market recovery; and (3) the shift in the composition of the population of low-income and poor households.

North Carolina’s unemployment rate of 9.4 percent in June 2012 was nearly twice as high as was the case in December 2007, a development that underscores the magnitude of the impact of the Great Recession on the state’s labor market. Furthermore, despite having grown in population, North Carolina had 5.3 percent fewer payroll jobs in June 2012 than in December 2007.

While the decline in real economic output between 2007 and 2009 was less severe in North Carolina than in the United States as a whole (–2.6 percent versus –4.4 percent), the recovery in output that occurred between 2009 and 2011 was slower in North Carolina than in the nation (4.4 percent versus 4.6 percent). Moreover, employment trends have proven much more volatile in North Carolina. Indeed, the recession battered a labor market that had never fully recovered from the 2001 recession. To put the matter bluntly, it is difficult to overstate the problems that have troubled the North Carolina labor market over the past decade. Policy wonks are still debating some of the details, but no one doubts that conditions remain distressed.

In the year prior to the onset of the Great Recession, North Carolina had an average monthly unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) of 4.7 percent. At the worst point in the recession (January–February 2010), the state’s jobless rate reached 11.4 percent. North Carolina was one of only nine states to exceed an unemployment rate of 11 percent.<sup>1</sup>

As Michael Walden, a well-respected North Carolina State University economist, explained in a *News and Observer* piece, “Why N.C. Lost So Many Jobs,” individual states differ in industrial composition and therefore are not affected equally by recessions. Some are hurt more by economic downturns. Therefore, if a state has a greater reliance on the types of economic sectors that are clobbered by recessions, then that state will see a bigger jump in unemployment when recessions hit.<sup>2</sup> In 2007, almost 22 percent of our state’s economy (measured by the output of businesses) was based on manufacturing, compared to the national average of 13 percent.<sup>3</sup> Thus, one reason our labor market took such a big hit was the economic downturn’s impact on the manufacturing sector. Yet the problems are not simply products of the manufacturing sector. North Carolina also has a finance/insurance sector and a government sector that are relatively large, as well as a sizable construction sector. All of these industries have struggled in different ways since 2007.

If structural reasons help to explain why North Carolina’s rise in unemployment surpassed the national unemployment rate during the recession, it is nonetheless true that North Carolina’s rate of unemployment has been slowly dropping. That said, nearly twice as many North Carolinians were unemployed in June 2012 as were jobless and seeking work some four and a half years earlier. Since bottoming out in early 2010, the North Carolina labor market has rebounded somewhat. In June 2012, the state’s 9.4 percent unemployment rate was tied with South Carolina for the nation’s fifth-highest rate, trailing only Nevada, Rhode Island, California, and New Jersey.

The economic picture may be improving a bit, but North Carolina is not out of the woods yet. Not by a long shot.

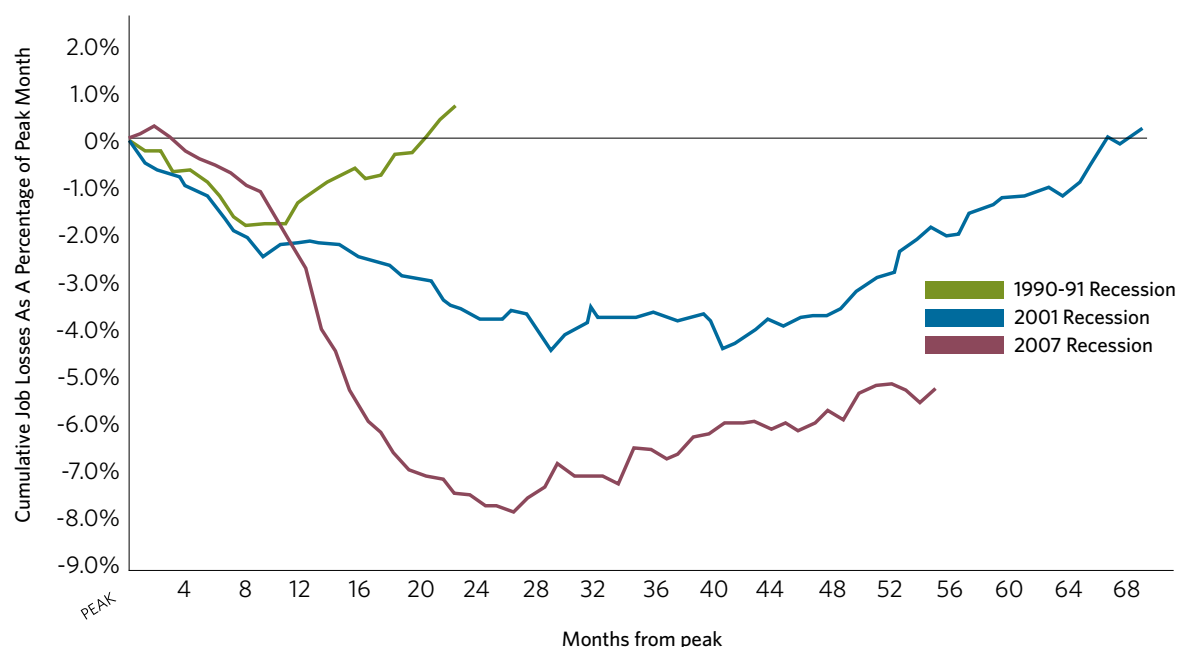
## The Severity of the Downturn

In December 2007, the broader American economy fell into the most severe recession of the postwar era, leading economist Paul Krugman to label the downturn “the Lesser Depression.”<sup>4</sup> Compared to prior recessions, the downturn was notable for the severity of the decline in the labor market as well as for the extent, speed, and persistence of the decline.<sup>5</sup> As previously suggested, North Carolina’s labor market never really recovered from the severe 2001 recession. In December 2007, the state had only 6.6 percent more payroll jobs (+256,800) than it did in December 2000. The Great Recession wiped away some 95 percent of that growth, and North Carolina ended 2011 with just 0.3 percent more jobs (+12,300) than it had eleven years earlier despite having grown 20.9 percent in the population of working age adults. (Overall, North Carolina’s entire population grew by 18.5 percent between the 2000 and 2010 decennial censuses.)

Prior to the downturn, some forecasters predicted that North Carolina would not be particularly harmed by a recession since the state’s housing market had not overheated to the same degree as occurred in other Sunbelt states. While that prediction proved true, in some respects, the national housing collapse still dragged down the state’s economy. More than four years after the onset of the Great Recession and two and a half years into a technical statewide recovery, it is clear that North Carolina was in no way immune to larger economic forces and has suffered more than many other states, at least in the areas of job loss and the associated economic hardships facing workers, families, and communities.

Between December 2007 and June 2012, North Carolina lost 5.3 percent of its payroll employment base. Losses occurred rapidly between October 2008 and May 2009 and then slowed before bottoming out in February 2010, a month in which the state had 7.8 percent fewer payroll jobs than it did more than two years earlier (see Figure 1).

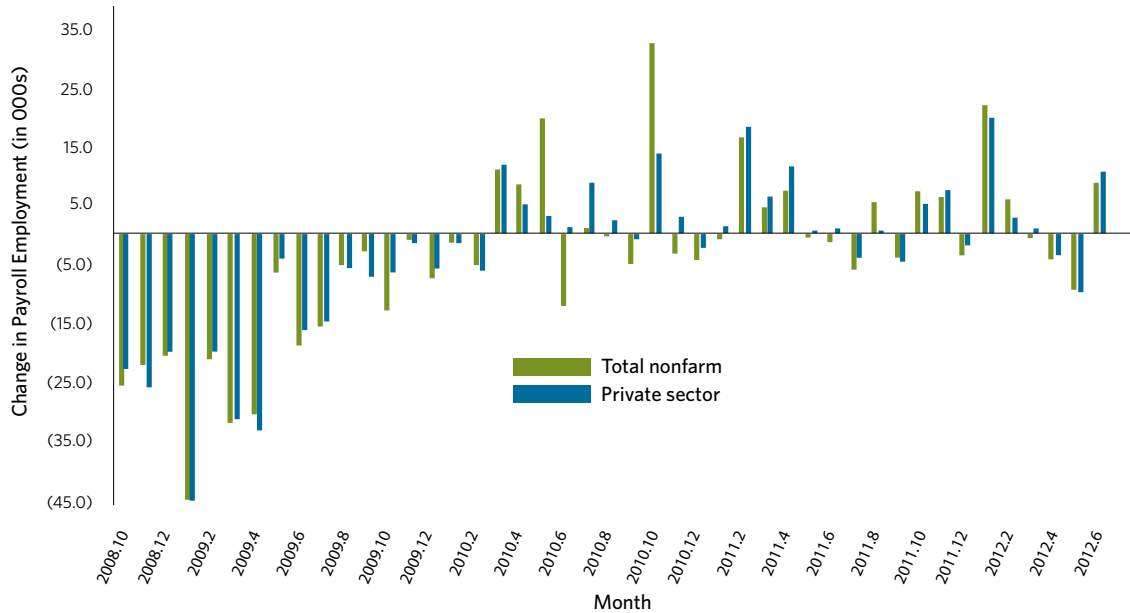
*figure 1* CUMULATIVE JOB LOSSES, MEASURED FROM LABOR MARKET PEAK TO RECOVERY BY MONTH, (SEASONALLY ADJUSTED), NORTH CAROLINA, LAST THREE RECESSIONS



SOURCE: DIVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS. SOUTH BY NORTH STRATEGIES, LTD. ANALYSIS.

Earlier in the recession, job losses were concentrated in the private sector, with public sector employment acting as a stabilizing force (see Figure 2). Since February 2010 or so, the opposite pattern has prevailed. The private sector has grown, but contractions in the public sector, particularly at the state and local levels, have significantly slowed growth. Public sector job loss, for example, offset 19.8 percent of the private sector gains logged in 2011.

figure 2 CHANGES IN TOTAL NONFARM PAYROLL EMPLOYMENT LEVEL (SEASONALLY ADJUSTED), NORTH CAROLINA, OCTOBER 2008 TO JUNE 2012



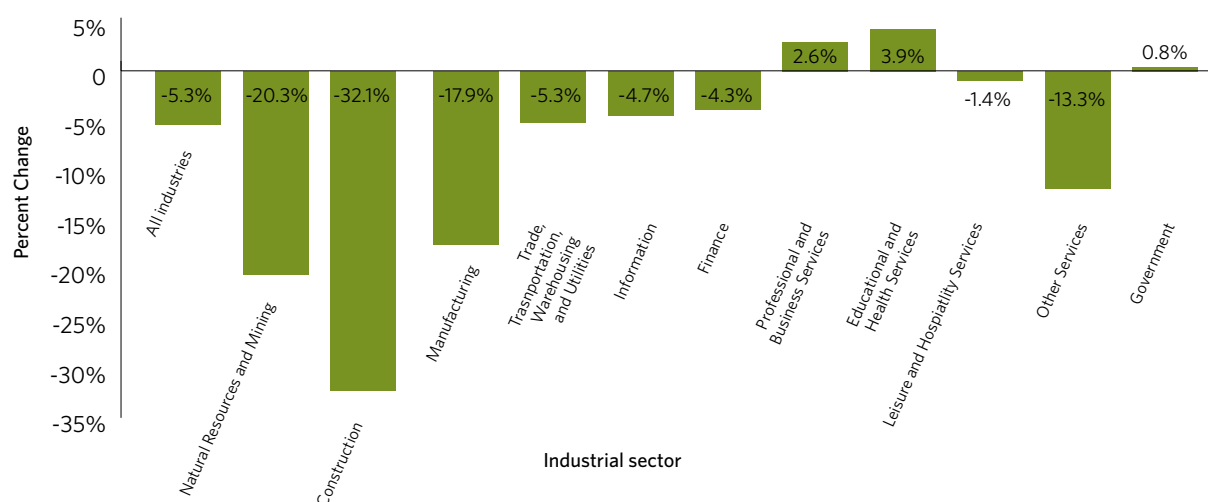
SOURCE: NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, LABOR AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS DIVISION, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS. SOUTH BY NORTH STRATEGIES, LTD. ANALYSIS.

The actual jobs gap is bigger than the one caused by the loss of jobs since 2007. The North Carolina economy needs to net approximately 6,000 jobs per month merely to keep pace with workforce growth. When those “missing” positions are included, the actual job gap facing the state in June 2012 was roughly 540,000, according to an analysis of data compiled by the Economic Policy Institute.<sup>6</sup>

One of the major characteristics of the Great Recession relates to the widespread nature of job losses. Payroll employment levels have fallen in almost every private industrial sector with the exception of education and health services and professional and business services. Of the major private sector industries with sizable levels of payroll employment, construction and manufacturing have contracted the most (see Figure 3 on the following page). As a consequence of the recession’s roots in a housing bubble, some 25 percent of the job losses in February 2010 (the month of maximum job loss in North Carolina) resulted from losses in the construction sector and the real estate subsector of the finance industry. Another 31 percent of the losses stemmed from the manufacturing sector.

In 2011, the state’s private sector netted 41,500 additional jobs, with many private industrial supersectors logging net growth. Leisure and hospitality grew at the fastest rate (+2.3 percent), driven by growth in the accommodation and food service subsector, which accounted for 24.6 percent of the year’s total private sector growth.

figure 3 NET CHANGE IN NONFARM PAYROLL EMPLOYMENT LEVELS BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR (SEASONALLY ADJUSTED), NORTH CAROLINA, DECEMBER 2007 TO JUNE 2012



SOURCE: NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, LABOR AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS DIVISION, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS. SOUTH BY NORTH STRATEGIES, LTD. ANALYSIS.

While 2011 was, relatively speaking, the best year of private sector job growth in some time, growth still proved extremely weak in relation to the job gap. Moreover, much of the private sector growth was in relatively low-value-added, low-wage industries such as food service and retail. Restrained job growth has continued in 2012. Over the first half of the year, North Carolina gained 20,400 private-sector jobs (+0.6 percent). Almost all of that growth occurred in the professional and business services and the trade, transportation, warehousing, and utilities sectors. Moreover, the pace of private-sector job growth decelerated during the first half of 2012, rising by 0.7 percent in the first quarter and then falling by 0.1 percent in the second quarter.

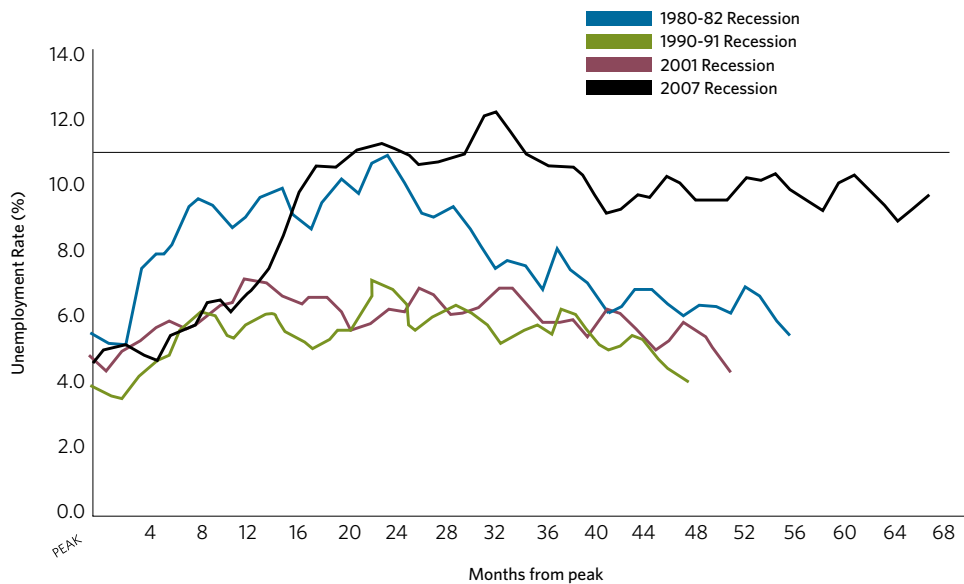
## The Slowness of the Labor Market Recovery

In North Carolina, the Great Recession produced a labor market crisis. Between 2007 and 2009, real gross domestic product (GDP) in the state fell by \$9.9 billion (2.6 percent) as a consequence of declines in the private sector that were only partially offset by increased government spending through mechanisms such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. From 2009 to 2011, North Carolina recovered all of its lost output and generated a real GDP of \$385.1 billion, compared to \$378.8 billion in 2007.<sup>± 2</sup>

High unemployment has characterized the North Carolina economy since late 2008. In 2011, the monthly unemployment rate averaged 10.5 percent, down from an average monthly rate of 10.9 percent in 2010. Furthermore, the statewide unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) equaled or exceeded 10 percent in every month from March 2009 through January 2012. Since then, the rate has fallen to 9.4 percent. That said, some 439,373 North Carolinians remained officially unemployed in June 2012.

<sup>±</sup> The growth in output was driven in part by increases in worker productivity; in other words fewer workers were needed to produce the same, if not greater, amount of output. This development has increased the gap between potential and actual economic output—a gap that likely will not close absent increased economic demand.

figure 4 NORTH CAROLINA MONTHLY UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (SEASONALLY UNADJUSTED), FROM PEAK TO RECOVERY, LAST FOUR RECESSIONS



SOURCE: NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, LABOR AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS DIVISION,, LOCAL AREA UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS. SOUTH BY NORTH STRATEGIES , LTD. ANALYSIS.

To place the current unemployment rate in context, the highest unemployment rate (seasonally unadjusted) recorded in North Carolina between 1980 and 2008 was 11 percent in February 1983 (see Figure 4). During that twenty-eight-year period, the rate exceeded the 10 percent threshold four times, all in 1982 and 1983. Since January 2009, however, the rate has exceeded 10 percent in twenty-seven of forty-two months and has not fallen below 9.1 percent, making the current downturn by far the state's worst since 1980 in terms of unemployment levels and the duration of high unemployment rates.

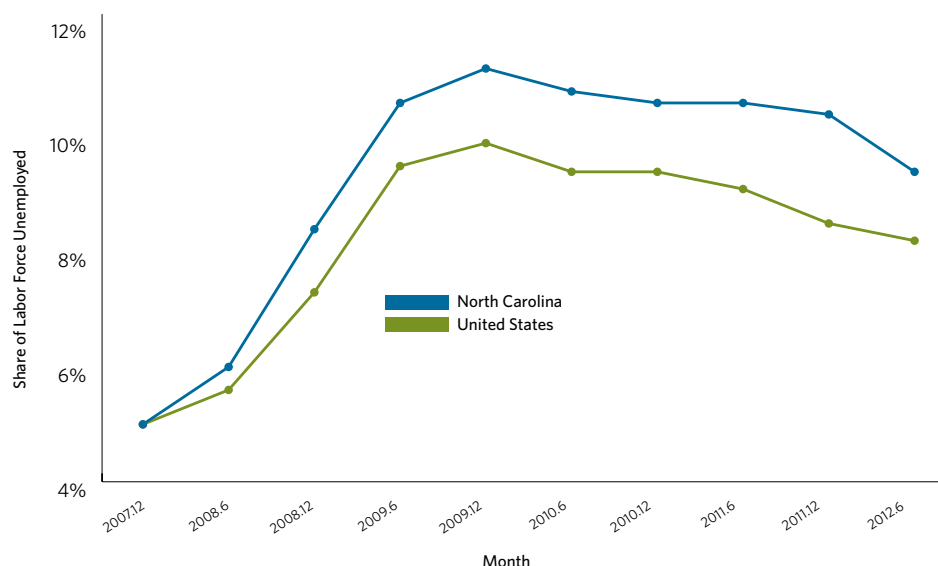
The state's labor market—as measured in the unemployment rate—has followed a different trajectory from that of GDP and has not yet returned to prerecessionary levels. In December 2007, some 5 percent of the state's labor force was unemployed (seasonally adjusted), as was 5 percent of the national labor force (see Figure 5 on the following page).<sup>8</sup> Both rates moved upward in 2008 and then spiked in the last part of that year. However, North Carolina's rate continued to climb and crossed the 11 percent threshold before drifting down to the June 2012 level.

Moreover, the unemployment rate understates the extent to which labor is idle in North Carolina. The underemployment rate, which is a more expansive measure of labor force underutilization, averaged 17.9 percent in 2011. With this measure, 17.9 percent of the state's labor force (adjusted) was unemployed, working part time as a result of a lack of full-time work, or marginally attached to the labor force, a category that encompasses discouraged workers or workers interested in work only if certain preconditions are met (e.g., access to child care).

Not only has unemployment surged across North Carolina, but the share of the adult population with jobs (seasonally adjusted) also has fallen to near the lowest level recorded since 1976. In June 2012, just 56.4 percent of working-age North Carolinians (ages sixteen and older) were employed. Over the period spanning 1976 to 2007, in



figure 5 MONTHLY UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (SEASONALLY ADJUSTED), UNITED STATES AND NORTH CAROLINA, DECEMBER 2007 TO JUNE 2012

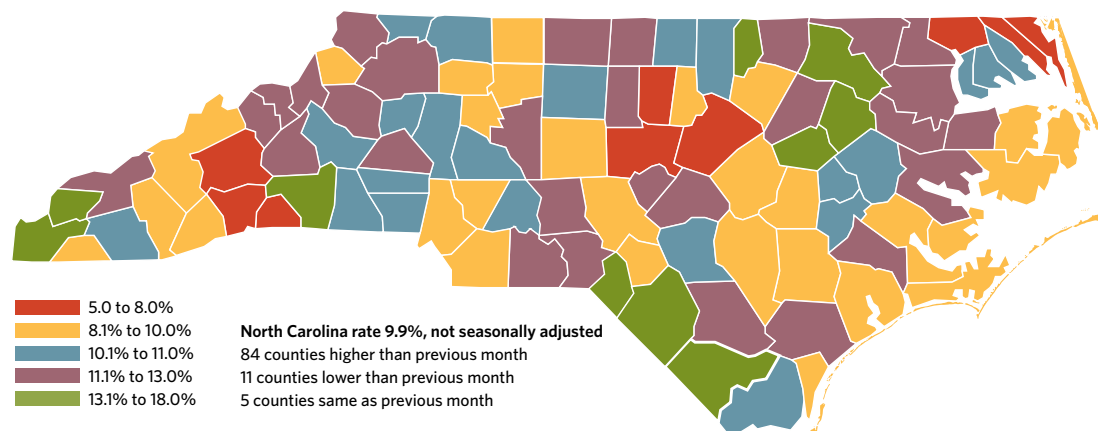


SOURCE: NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, LABOR AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS DIVISION, LOCAL AREA UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS. SOUTH BY NORTH STRATEGIES, LTD. ANALYSIS. NOTE: Y-AXIS BEGINS AT 4% TO BETTER ILLUSTRATE CHANGES.

contrast, the monthly employment-to-population ratio averaged 63.6 percent. While some degree of decline certainly resulted from the aging of the population, the magnitude of the recent drops indicates that significant cyclical forces are also at play.

Similarly, the share of the civilian working-age population participating (seasonally adjusted) in the labor force is hovering near the thirty-six-year low of 61.6 percent recorded in early 2011. In June 2012, the statewide labor force participation rate equaled 62.2 percent. This rate will influence the trajectory of the unemployment rate and the pace of job creation needed to lower the unemployment rate. The lower the participation rate, the fewer jobs needed to reduce unemployment to any given level. Ironically, then, the unemployment rate could fall even though large numbers of people remain jobless.

figure 6 NORTH CAROLINA UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY COUNTY (SEASONALLY UNADJUSTED), JUNE 2012



NOTE: JUNE 2012 DATES ARE PRELIMINARY. PREPARED BY NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, LABOR AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS DIVISION, JULY 2012 (CURRENT AS OF AUGUST 15, 2012)

High rates of unemployment are spread across the state. Even in “low” unemployment counties like Orange, the unemployment rate is unusually high by any historical level. Take the Durham-Chapel Hill Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which generally has had the lowest unemployment rate of any of the state’s metropolitan areas since the onset of the Great Recession. In December 2007, the metro’s unemployment rate equaled 3.8, but in June 2012, it totaled 8 percent. Compared to roughly four years earlier, the regional unemployment rate in the state’s best-performing MSA was 4.2 percentage points higher, while the number of unemployed persons was 2.2 times greater.

Despite recent improvements in local labor market conditions, unemployment remains elevated across much of the state. In June 2012, 61 of the state’s 100 counties had unadjusted unemployment rates at or above 10 percent (See Figure 6, previous page). In terms of geography, the metro unemployment rate (40 counties) was 9.4 percent, compared to a non-metro rate of 10.9 percent. Meanwhile, the combined unemployment rate in the “Big Three” metro regions the Research Triangle, Piedmont Triad, and Charlotte—regions home to half of the state’s labor force—was 9.2 percent. The Triangle had the lowest rate (8.2 percent), followed by the Piedmont Triad (10 percent), and Charlotte (10.2 percent).

*table 1* **LABOR FORCE ESTIMATES (PERIOD ESTIMATES) BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, NORTH CAROLINA, 2008–2010**

	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment Rate
<b>All Persons</b>		
Total	54.8%	9.3%
<b>by Gender</b>		
Male	59.7%	9.7%
Female	50.3%	8.9%
<b>by Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White, Non-Hispanic	57.7%	8.3%
Black/African American	53.3%	15.4%
Hispanic/Latino	63.8%	12.1%
Asian	61.8%	7.6%
Native American	47.2%	12.4%
<b>by Age</b>		
16-19	28.3%	27.9%
20-24	58.2%	16.9%
25-54	70.2%	8.7%
55-64	53.7%	6.0%
65+	15.3%	6.2%
<b>by Education (ages 25-64)</b>		
No High School Diploma	51.5%	16.1%
High School Diploma/GED	65.9%	10.9%
Some College or Associate's Degree	72.1%	8.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	81.2%	4.1%

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU, AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY, THREE-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2008–2010, SOUTH BY NORTH STRATEGIES, LTD. ANALYSIS.

A distinctive feature of the recession is that the labor market challenges have not been limited to specific demographic groups, though some population segments have struggled much more than others. All demographic groups have experienced significant labor market difficulties. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, an average of 9.3 percent of North Carolina's civilian labor force was unemployed between 2008 and 2010, a period that encompasses the heart of the recession in North Carolina (see Table 1, previous page).

Between 2008 and 2010, male workers in North Carolina had, on average, a higher unemployment rate than female workers (9.7 percent versus 8.9 percent). In terms of racial and ethnic groups, Asians experienced the lowest average unemployment rate (7.6 percent), followed by white, non-Hispanic workers (8.3 percent), Hispanic workers (12.1 percent), Native American workers (12.4 percent), and African American workers (15.4 percent). The low employment-to-population ratios among African American and Native American workers (53.3 percent and 47.2 percent, respectively) were especially alarming. The remaining three racial/ethnic groups had employment-to-population ratios above the statewide average of 54.8 percent in 2008–10.

Unemployment by age also merits attention. On average, older workers (ages fifty-five and above) experienced lower rates of unemployment between 2008 and 2010 than did younger ones, especially those between ages twenty and twenty-four. Yet older workers who lost jobs had more difficulty finding new positions; nationally, half of all unemployed workers age fifty and older who were unemployed in 2011 had been jobless for at least six months.<sup>9</sup> The high unemployment rates experienced by young adults also deserve attention, given the growing body of scholarly research that suggests that the economic conditions encountered upon initial entrance into the job market have significant lifelong economic impacts.

Unemployment rates by level of educational attainment among workers aged between twenty-five and sixty-four merit specific attention. Between 2008 and 2010, the average unemployment rate among adults with at least a bachelor's degree was 4.1 percent, a level that was low relative to other groups but was actually quite high for the reference population. In addition, some evidence suggests that the low unemployment rate among the population with at least a bachelor's degree largely results from those with graduate degrees; adults with only bachelor's degrees are faring less well. Finally, although they are better off than those with only a high school diploma, individuals with some postsecondary education or associate's degrees are not performing as well as their more educated peers. The unemployment rate among individuals without high school diplomas averaged 16.1 percent from 2008 to 2010.

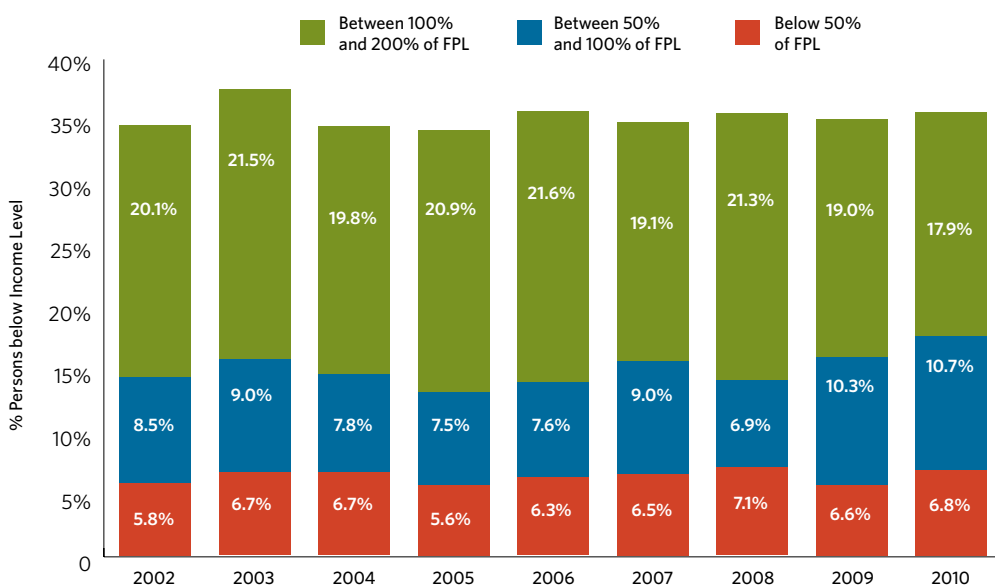
Average unemployment rates also increased from the prior three-year period (2005–7) for every major demographic group. The unemployment rate for those with at least a bachelor's degree, for example, increased from 2.7 percent to 4.1 percent. In fact, the average unemployment rate was at least 1.5 times greater in 2008–10 than it was in 2005–7 for every educational group, with the rate increasing the most for those with some college or an associate's degree.

## The Shift from *Working Poor* to Poor Households

Sustained high unemployment in North Carolina is a product of the relative scarcity of jobs in the state and in the larger region. More broadly, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were three unemployed adult southerners for every available job opening in the region in June 2012. In short, there simply were no jobs for two of every three unemployed Southerners in June. Given the lack of jobs, the economic hardships associated with joblessness have multiplied across the state.

Since late 2007, the share of North Carolinians with incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level (\$44,628 for a four-person family in 2010) has climbed.<sup>10</sup> In 2010, the most recent year for which data are available, 35.4 percent of the state's population had incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level, while 17.5 percent of the population had

figure 7 SHARE OF PERSONS BELOW 200% OF FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL BY INCOME LEVEL, NORTH CAROLINA, 2002-2010



SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU, ANNUAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SUPPLEMENT, VARIOUS YEARS. SOUTH BY NORTH STRATEGIES, LTD. ANALYSIS.

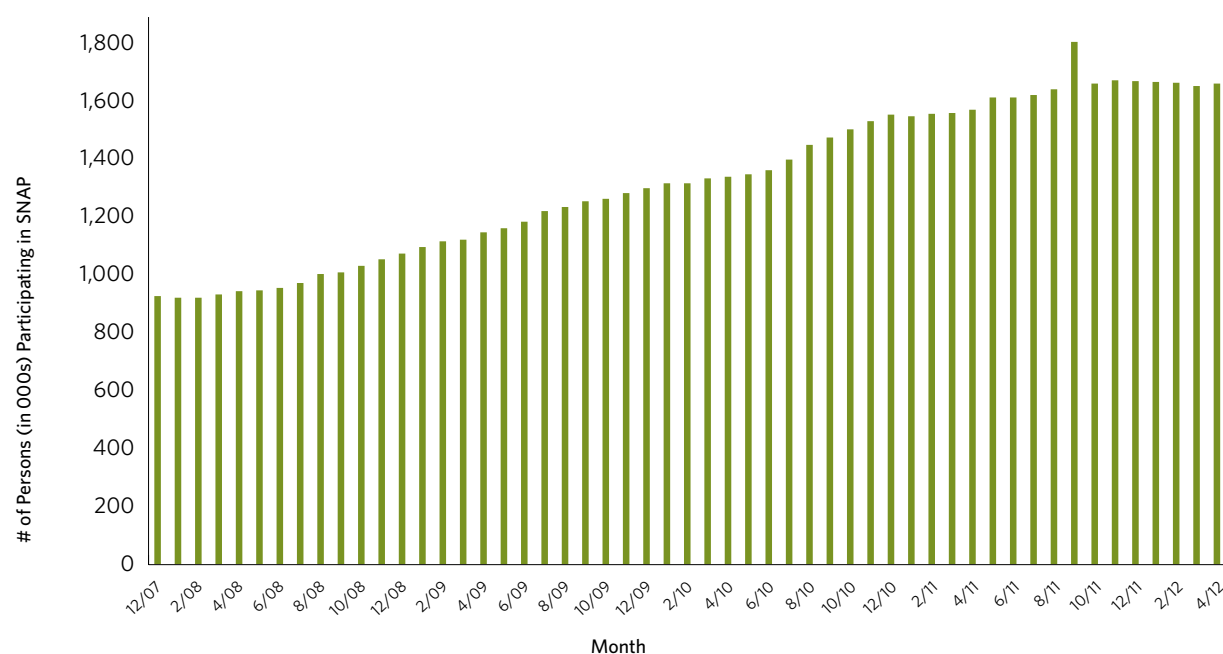
incomes below the poverty threshold (see Figure 7). Alarming, the 17.5 (based on the graph) percent poverty rate posted in 2010 was the third-highest annual figure recorded since 1980 and the highest logged since 1982. Furthermore, in 2010, 6.8 percent of North Carolinians experienced “deep poverty,” meaning that they lived in households with incomes below 50 percent of the poverty level (\$11,157 for a four-person family).

The recent downturn has reduced the share of North Carolinians living in “working poor” households, meaning those with incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the poverty line. This change is largely attributable to individuals falling down the income ladder—often pushed by a job loss.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the child poverty rate in North Carolina reached 25 percent in 2010, with an estimated 259,000 of the state's 560,000 poor children residing in households with annual incomes below 50 percent of the federal poverty level. Ten years earlier, in

contrast, the child poverty rate equaled 19 percent— an unacceptably high rate in and of itself—with 8 percent of the state’s poor children living in households experiencing deep poverty. One major consequence of this recession has been a surge in participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is the one safety net program with uniform national eligibility criteria. Between December 2011 and April 2012, North Carolina’s SNAP caseload grew by 78.8 percent, or 727,332 persons (see Figure 8) to 1.7 million, 17.1 percent of the state’s population. Moreover, the spike in

figure 8 NUMBER OF PERSONS PARTICIPATING IN SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, NORTH CAROLINA, DECEMBER 2007 TO APRIL 2012



Since 12/07, the number of North Carolinians participating in the SNAP program has increased by 727,332 (+78.8%). In 4/12, some 1.7 million individuals were participating. This is equal to 17.1% of the state’s estimated 2011 population.

NOTE: THE SIZABLE INCREASE IN 9/11 IS DUE TO PROVISION OF TEMPORARY NATURAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOLLOWING HURRICANE IRENE.  
SOURCE: FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER COMPILATION OF USDA DATA. SOUTH BY NORTH STRATEGIES, LTD. ANALYSIS .

North Carolina’s child poverty rate is just the beginning. A tangle of associated social, educational, and health-related challenges continues to plague hundreds of thousands of poor children, as the 2012 *Kids Count Data Book*, recently released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, amply attests.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, a review of all recent labor market data indicates that North Carolina is grappling with the worst employment downturn since 1980. Jobs have disappeared in almost every major industry, and unemployment has surged across all demographic groups and communities. Although the worst of the job losses appears to have passed, the state’s labor market still is not growing robustly enough to absorb all those who want and need work, so a full economic recovery remains a distant goal.

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- 2 Michael Walden, *Why North Carolina Lost So Many Jobs*, *News and Observer*, May 20, 2012, <http://www.newsobserver.com/2012/05/20/2072771/why-nc-lost-so-many-jobs.html>
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- 4 See, for example, Paul Krugman, "The Lesser Depression," *New York Times*, July 21, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/22/opinion/22krugman.html>.
- 5 The National Bureau of Economic Research dates the recession as unfolding between December 2007 and June 2009. Measured strictly in terms of changes in payroll employment levels, the recession in North Carolina lasted from February 2008 until February 2010.
- 6 Author's analysis of Economic Policy Institute, *Job Watch: July 2012*, July 22, 2012.
- 7 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Real GDP by State* (millions of chained 2005 dollars), June 5, 2012.
- 8 All unemployment rates in this paragraph are seasonally adjusted figures.
- 9 Claire McKenna, *Long Road ahead for Older Unemployed Workers* (New York: National Employment Law Project, 2012), 1, <http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/2012/NELP.older.workers.3.9.2012.pdf?nocdn=1>.
- 10 U.S. Census Bureau, *Poverty Thresholds by Size of Family and Number of Children: 2010*, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/thresh10.xls>.
- 11 As of the spring of 2012, 17.1 percent of the state's population was connected to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, for which households are eligible only if they have monthly incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level (\$2,422 for a four-person household).
- 12 Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book*, 2012, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/databook/2012/>.