

NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



2015 NC COUNTY SNAPSHOTS

50 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ALL 100 COUNTIES

A publication of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners' Center for County Research

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

“2015 NC County Snapshots: 50 Things to Know About All 100 Counties” is a publication of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners’ Center for County Research, following in the tradition of previous years’ “Map Books.” The data presented in “County Snapshots” did not originate from the Association, but Center for County Research staff normalized certain data points in the interest of comprehension (no raw data was changed in this process). All data was taken from federal, state and private sources, and they are referenced within the text.

The Association would like to give special thanks to those individuals and organizations who aided in the data collection process, including: the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the North Carolina Sheriffs’ Association, the Local Government Division at the North Carolina Department of Revenue, and the State and Local Government Finance Division at the North Carolina Department of State Treasurer.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4		
Education	5-12		
<u>Educational Expenditures</u>			
1. County Expenditures Per Pupil			
2. Total Expenditures Per Pupil			
3. School Fund Balances			
<u>Educational Performance</u>			
4. Four-Year Graduation Rates			
5. Dropout Rates			
<u>Miscellaneous Educational Indicators</u>			
6. Charter Schools in Each County			
7. County Enrollment in Community Colleges			
Demographics	13-18		
1. Population Change (2008 to 2014)			
2. Under-18 and 65-and-Over Populations (Ratio)			
3. Foreign-Born Population (Non-Citizen) (Percent)			
4. Urbanization			
5. Projected Veteran Populations (2015)			
Health and Human Services	19-37		
<u>Overall Health Outcome Rankings</u>			
1. County Health Rankings			
<u>Poverty and Hunger</u>			
2. Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Cases by County (Active)			
3. SNAP (Food Stamps) Benefits Per Households (Average)			
4. Food Insecurity Rates			
5. Students on Free/Reduced Meals			
6. Population in Poverty			
7. Children in Poverty			
<u>Family Structure</u>			
8. Children in Foster Care			
9. Children in Single-Parent Households			
10. Teen Pregnancy Rates			
<u>Health Behaviors</u>			
11. Adults Reporting Fair or Poor Health			
12. Adult Uninsured Populations			
		13. Adult Obesity Rates	
		14. Adult Smoking Rates	
		<u>Health Access</u>	
		15. Reported Cost Barriers to Health Care Access	
		16. Doctors Per Capita	
		17. Dentists Per Capita	
		18. Mental Health Providers Per Capita	
		Justice and Public Safety	38-40
		1. Property Crimes	
		2. Violent Crimes	
		Economic Development	41-59
		<u>Employment and Household Wealth</u>	
		1. Per Capita Personal Income	
		2. Full- and Part-Time Jobs	
		3. Average Weekly Wage	
		4. Hourly Living Wage	
		5. Unemployment Rate	
		6. Change in Unemployment (12 Month)	
		7. 2013-14 Jobs Growth Rate	
		8. Economic Recovery (Pre- vs. Post-Recession)	
		<u>Workforce Characteristics</u>	
		9. Where Residents Work (Ratio)	
		10. High School Graduates (Percent)	
		11. College Graduates (Percent)	
		<u>Housing and Property</u>	
		12. Residential Building Permits	
		13. Median Home Value	
		14. Subsidized Housing	
		15. Homeownership Rate	
		<u>Economic Performance</u>	
		16. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	
		17. Tourism Expenditures	
		18. Agricultural Cash Receipts	
		Conclusion	60

INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners is pleased to introduce “2015 N.C. County Snapshots: 50 Things to Know About All 100 Counties.” The new “County Snapshots” summary will replace the Association’s “Map Book,” and highlight the demographic, social, and educational statuses of all 100 counties, as the go-to source for the most current data on county characteristics. We have compiled data and figures from the most reliable federal, state, and private agencies and organizations, and expanded the scope and number of data indicators to provide a more comprehensive picture of North Carolina counties.

“County Snapshots” is divided into five chapters: Education, Demographics, Health and Human Services, Justice and Public Safety, and Economic Development, each with its own subgroups of indicators. Indicators were chosen based upon criteria of timeliness and relevance to current policy discourse, communications from county representatives, as well as our own identification of critical characteristics. Our goal is for this summary to serve as a resource to policymakers and representatives of all 100 counties, assisting you in making the most informed policy decisions possible based on the highest quality available research.

Each indicator is designated with a map or a chart, as well as a legend, explanation of the indicator, and source reference to provide context and clarity. The chapters have their own unique trends, and so the chapters are outfitted with brief summaries on how to interpret patterns and what can be gleaned from the data.

This summary will allow policymakers to identify the status of their own counties, and draw comparisons among counties, leading to the exchange of best practices and lessons learned to the benefit of each county. “County Snapshots” is available at www.ncacc.org/countysnapshots.

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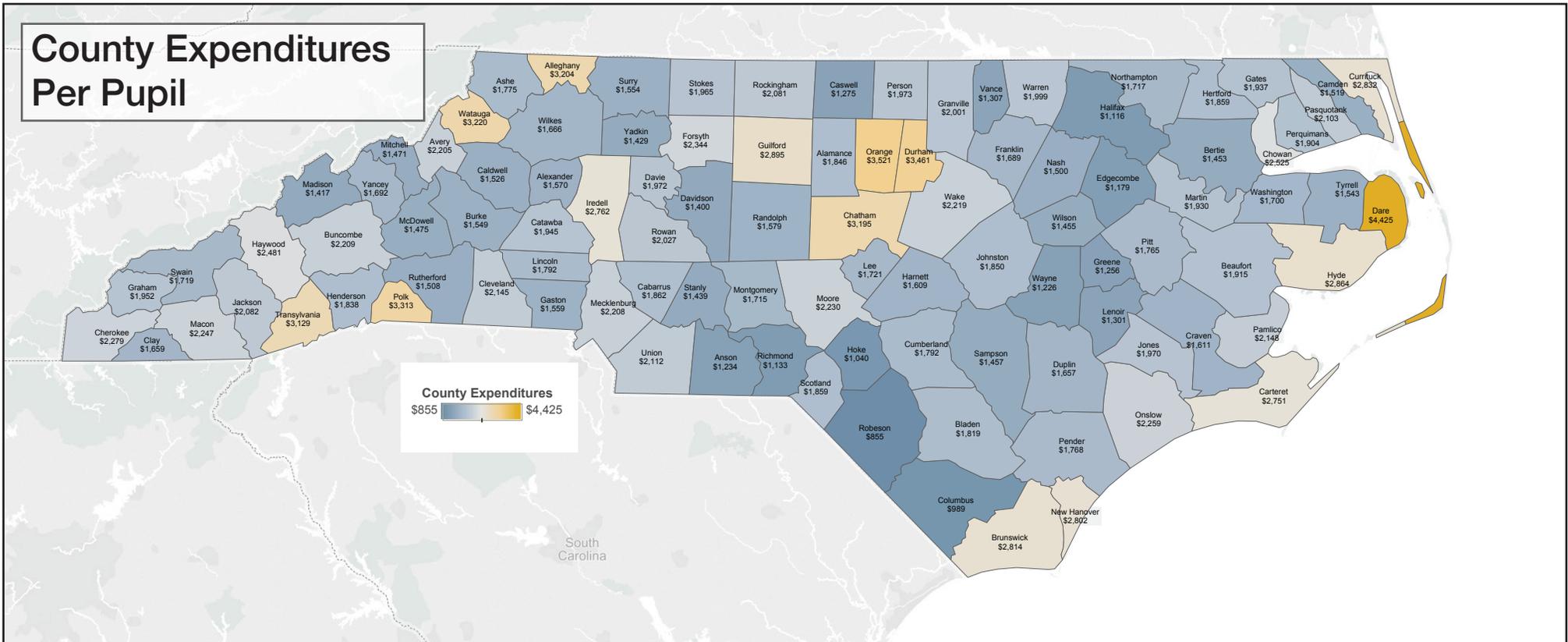
CHAPTER 1 - EDUCATION

The indicators clustered in the “Education” chapter paint clear regional images of performance and expenditures in North Carolina schools. Statewide high school graduation rates have reached the highest levels seen since the state started tracking cohort graduation rates in 2006, with ten counties boasting rates of at least 90%. Regionally, the Mountain counties—and several Coastal counties—lay claim to the highest four-year cohort graduation rates. Additionally, Coastal counties and Eastern Mountain counties have the lowest dropout rates. The Coastal region in general appears to be comprised of the counties with some of the strongest educational indicators, hallmarked by Hyde and Tyrrell’s 0.00-dropout rates, which is the first time any local education agency (LEA) has reported zero dropouts for a school year. Coastal counties, select Mountain counties, and Orange, Durham and Chatham counties have the highest per-average daily membership (ADM) educational expenditures, with investments of more than \$3,000 per student.

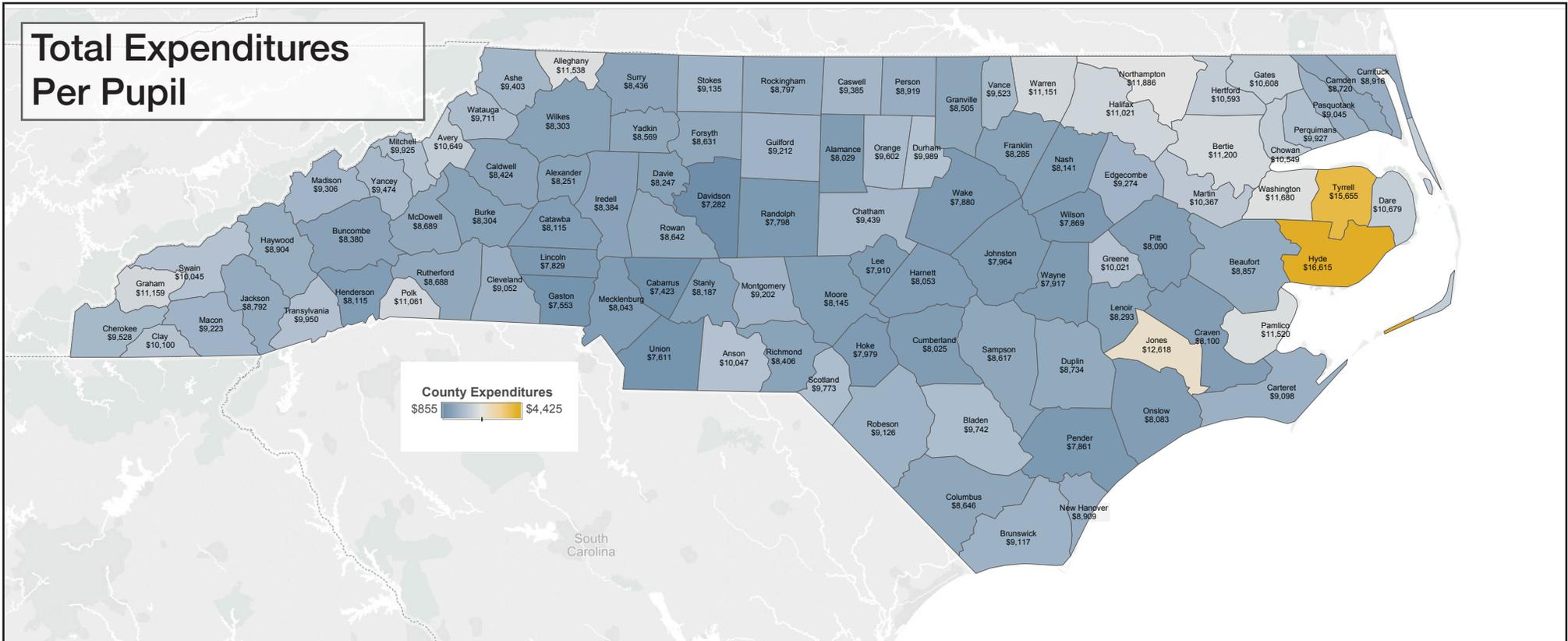
On a related financial note, local school fund balances vary significantly, and not necessarily in relation to expenditures or performance. Many of the Eastern Mountain counties have limited school fund balances, often below \$1.0 million, or equivalent to less than \$10 per resident. On the other end of the spectrum, 23 county school systems carry a fund balance of more than \$100 per resident.

Not surprisingly, the more robustly urbanized areas of the Piedmont are home to the counties with the most charter schools, as well as the counties with the most community college enrollees—Buncombe County being an exception.

CHAPTER 1 - EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES)



CHAPTER 1 - EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES)

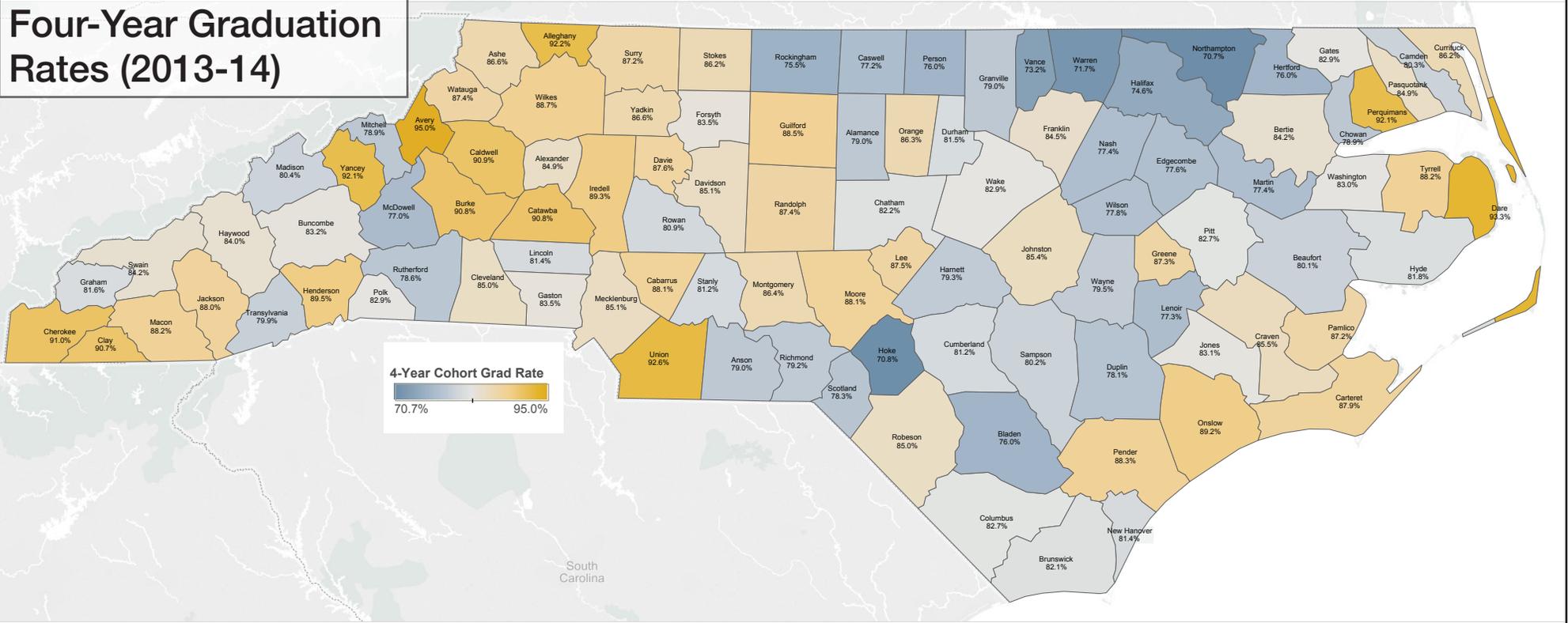


Explanation: Educational expenditures (includes salaries, employee benefits, purchased services, supplies and materials, and instructional equipment) from county, state, and federal funding sources

Source: Department of Public Instruction, Statistical Profiles (2013-2014)

CHAPTER 1 - EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES)

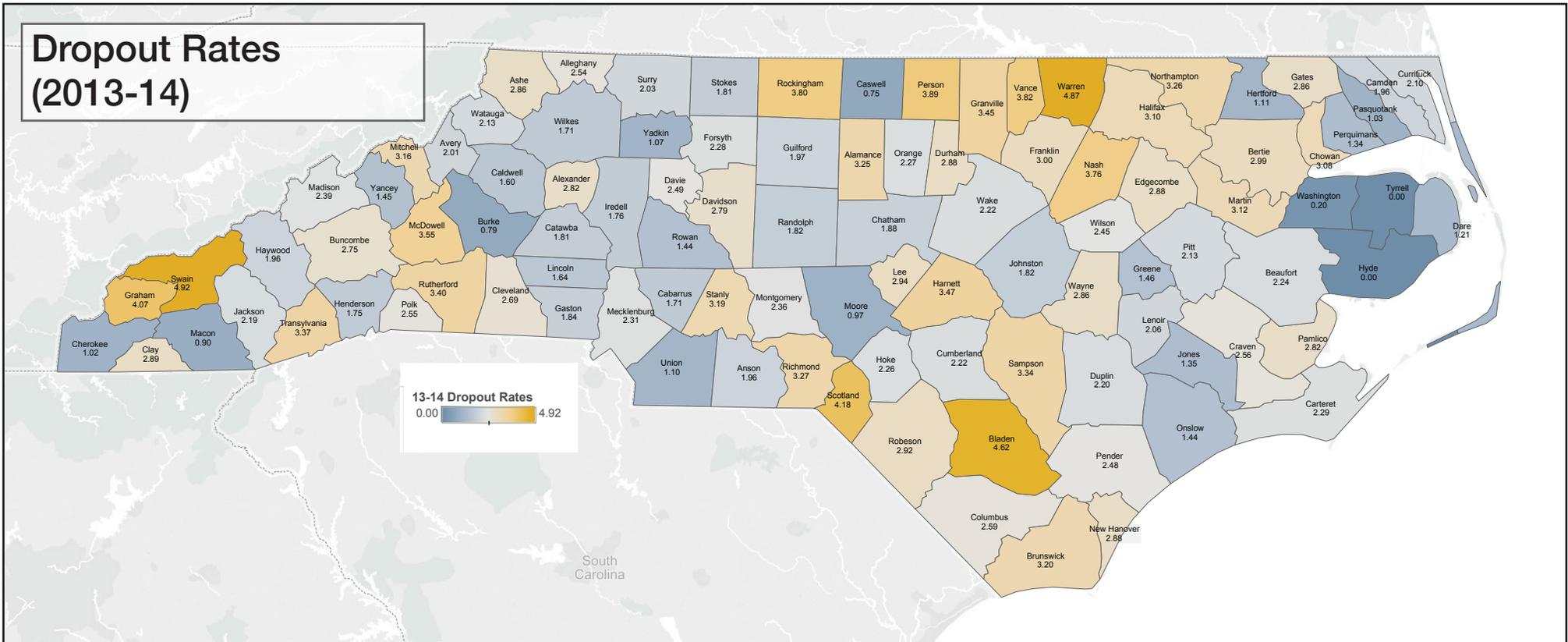
Four-Year Graduation Rates (2013-14)



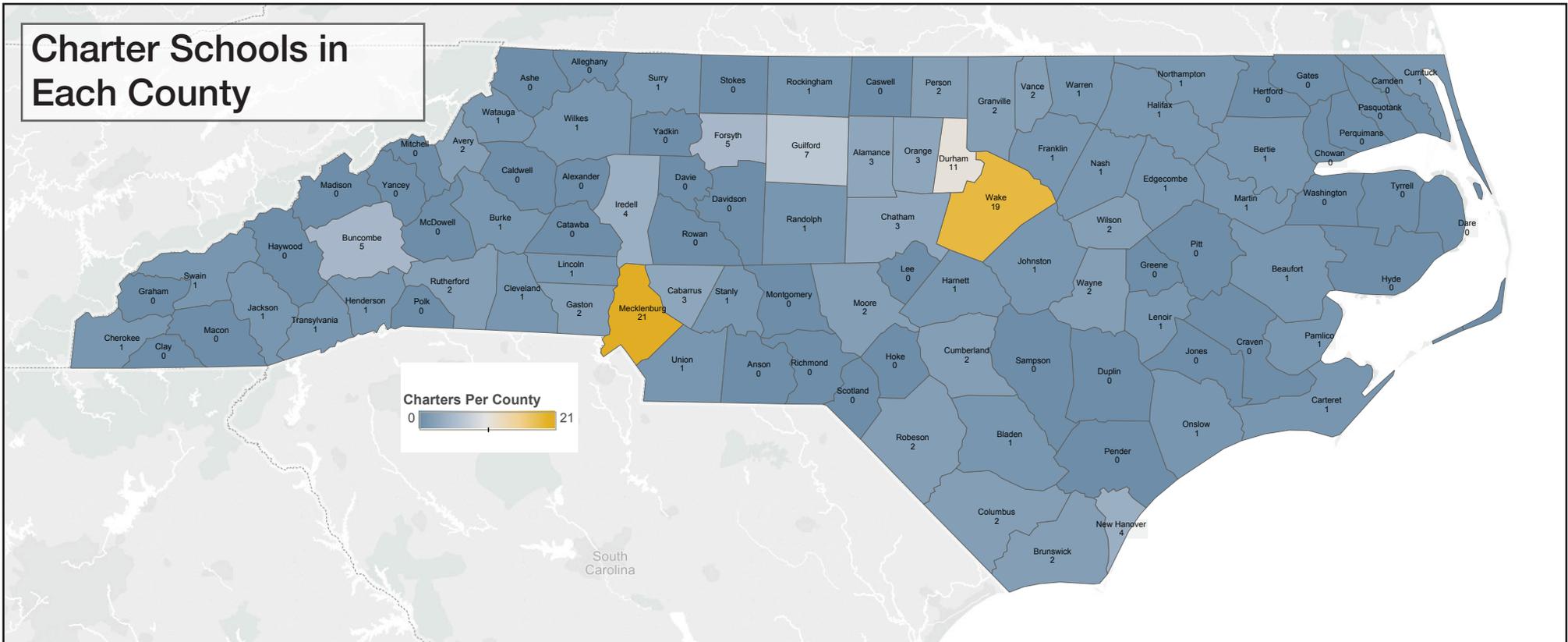
Explanation: Percentage of ninth graders who graduated from high school four years later

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, North Carolina Graduation Results Web Site — Data as of October 2, 2014

CHAPTER 1 - EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES)



CHAPTER 1 - EDUCATION (MISC. EDUCATIONAL INDICATORS)

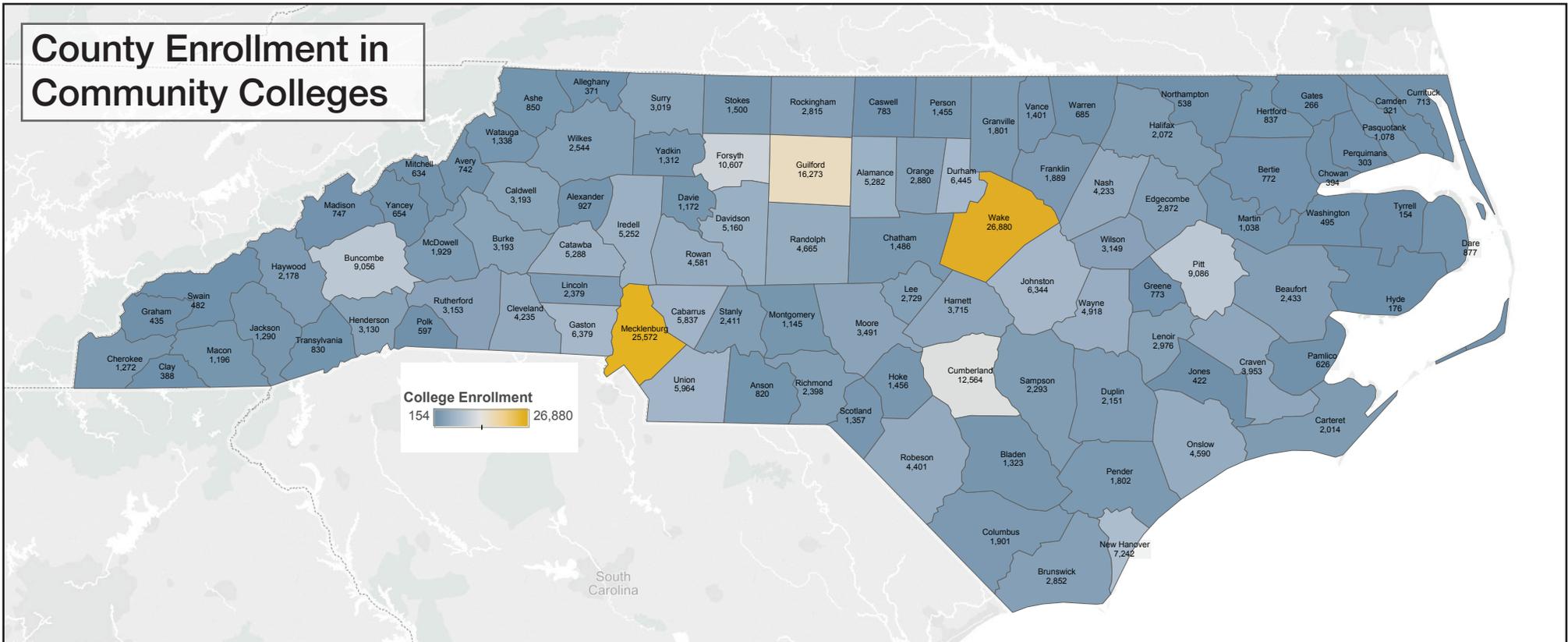


Explanation: Number of charter schools in each county

Source: Department of Public Instruction, Office of Charter Schools (2014-15)

CHAPTER 1 - EDUCATION (MISC. EDUCATIONAL INDICATORS)

County Enrollment in Community Colleges



CHAPTER 2 - DEMOGRAPHICS

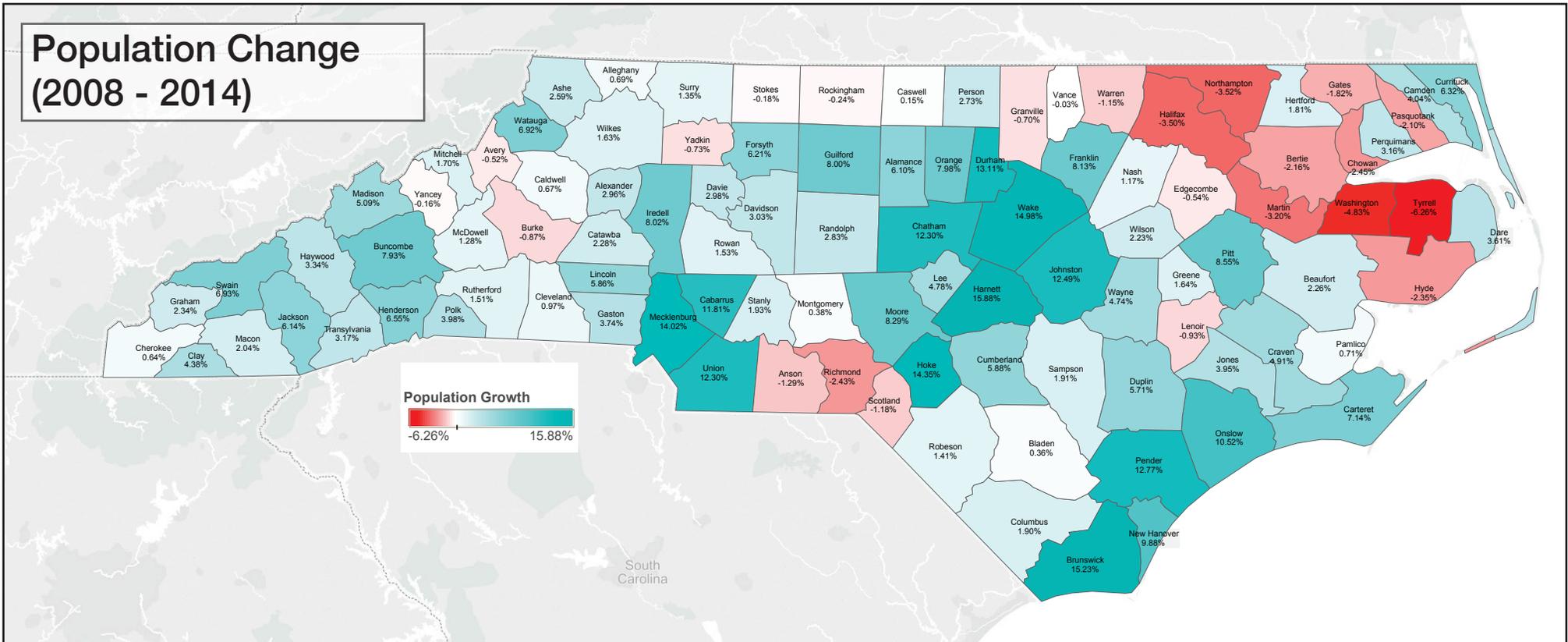
The chapter on demographics focuses primarily on each county's population. While we have analyzed data tracking population changes from the onset of the Great Recession in 2008 through 2014, the make-up of each county's population is represented by the most current data. The largest population increases in the past few years have been in the Piedmont and southeast regions of the state. Northern counties and the Northern Coastal region have experienced the largest percentage decreases in population, though it is not clear how many of those individuals migrated to other counties within the state, or if they left the state altogether.

Wake, Union, Mecklenburg, Onslow, Harnett and Johnston are among the “youngest” counties in the state, with the highest ratios of residents under the age of 18 to residents over the age of 65. Wake, for example, has an age ratio of 1.50, meaning that their under-18 population is 1.5 times (or 50%) larger than the county's 65-and-over population. Along the same vein, Mecklenburg and Central Piedmont counties have the highest urban to rural population ratio, meaning that their residential make-up is considerably more urban than rural—though not surprising in itself.

Mecklenburg and Central Piedmont are home to the largest foreign-born non-citizen and veteran populations in the state. Foreign-born non-citizens make up the largest percentage of local populations in the most metropolitan counties—such as Mecklenburg and Wake—as well as the counties with the highest agricultural output, such as Duplin and Sampson.

CHAPTER 2 - DEMOGRAPHICS

Population Change (2008 - 2014)

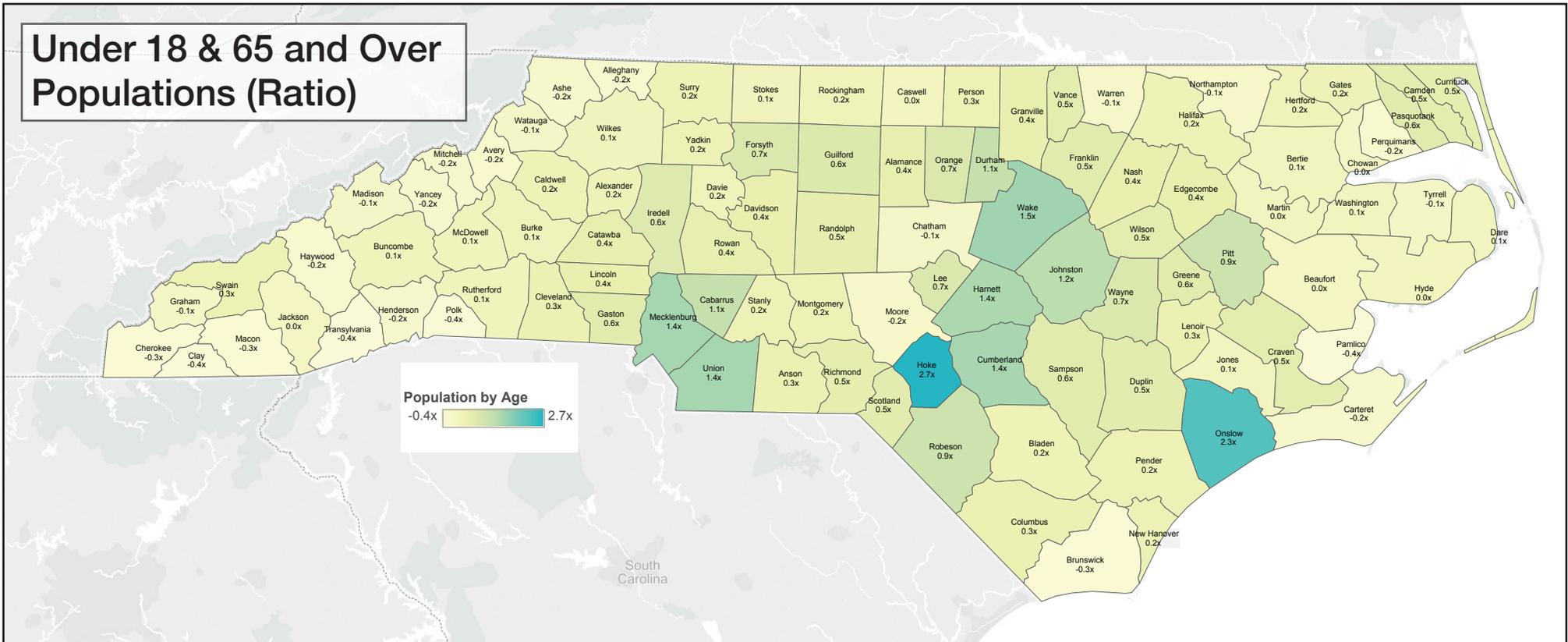


Explanation: A county's population change from 2008 to 2014 expressed as a percentage

Source: North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management Provisional 2014 Population Estimates, and Smoothed 2008 Estimates

CHAPTER 2 - DEMOGRAPHICS

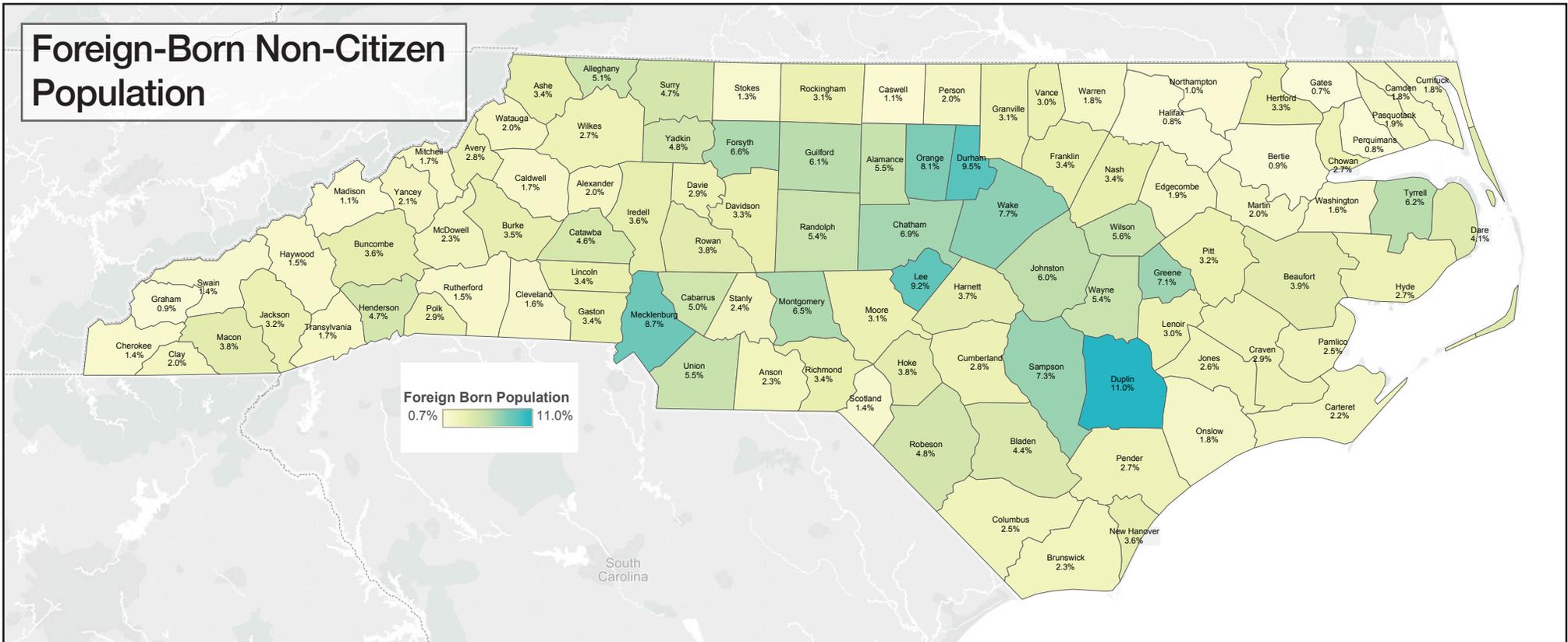
Under 18 & 65 and Over Populations (Ratio)



Explanation: Size of a county's under-18 population compared to its 65-and-over population, expressed as a ratio. A county with a figure of 0.0 would have equally large under-18 and 65-and-over populations. A county with a figure of 2.0 would have an under-18 population 2x as large as its 65-and-over population. A negative number indicates a larger 65-and-over population.

Source: North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management Provisional 2014 Population Estimates

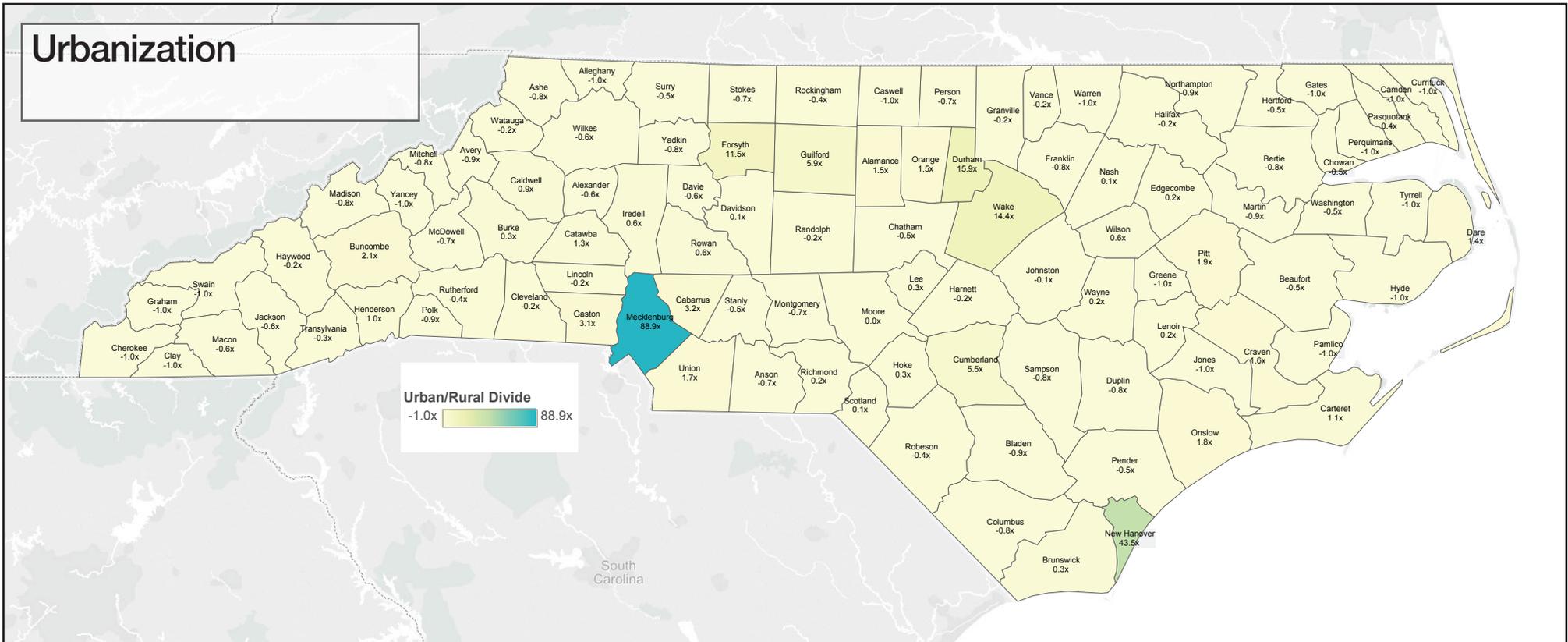
CHAPTER 2 - DEMOGRAPHICS



Explanation: Foreign-born residents in the county who are not U.S. citizens as percentage of total county population

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; National Association of Counties

CHAPTER 2 - DEMOGRAPHICS

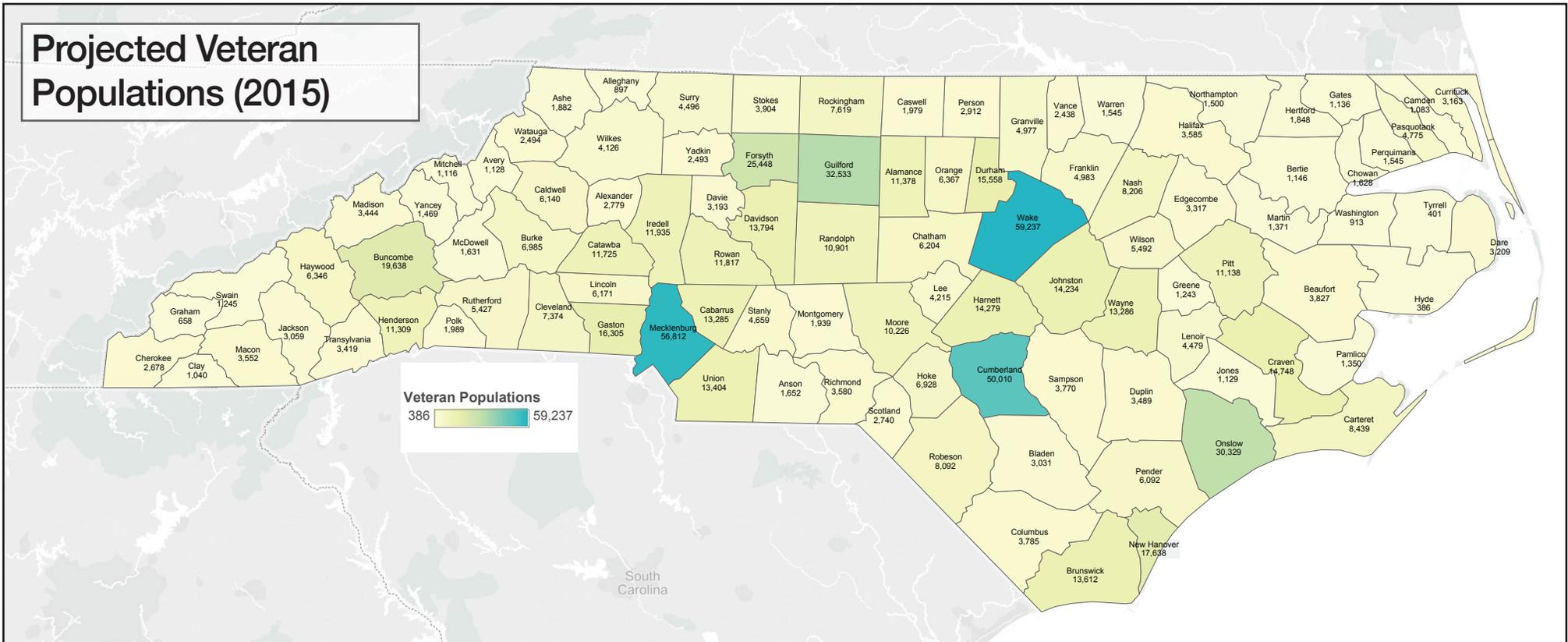


Explanation: Size of the county's urban population compared to its rural population, expressed as a ratio. A county with a 0.0 figure would have equally large urban and rural populations. A county with a figure of 2.0 would have an urban population 2x as large as its rural population. A negative number indicates a larger rural population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

CHAPTER 2 - DEMOGRAPHICS

Projected Veteran Populations (2015)



Explanation: County veteran population projections for Fiscal Year 2015

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics 2014

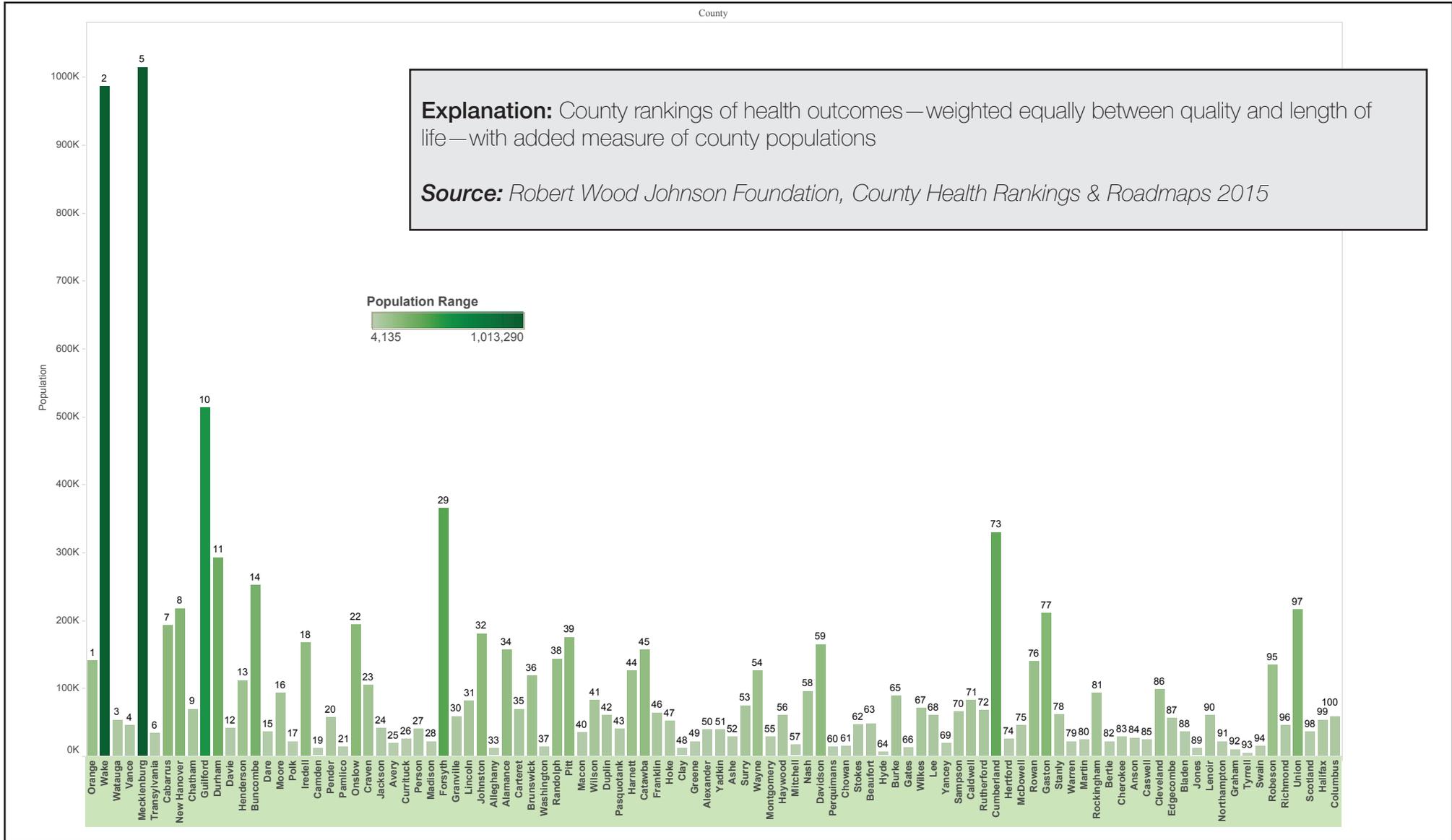
CHAPTER 3 - HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

According to the County Health Rankings program by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Orange and Wake counties rank as the top two counties in terms of residents' health outcomes. The rankings equally weight both quality and length of life. The Central Piedmont region similarly grades well in poverty measures, the self-reported health status of adults, teen pregnancy rates, smoking rates, and primary care physician, dentist and mental health provider ratios. Conversely, Southern Piedmont and the I-95 corridor counties fare poorly in measures of health status. Each of those regions has comparatively high food insecurity rates, childhood and general poverty rates, and adult obesity rates. Furthermore, those regions have particularly high rates of children in single-parent households, and children taking free/reduced meals in schools.

Mountain counties have particularly high figures of SNAP benefits per household (though the average may be skewed given those counties' small populations), as well as their high rates of uninsured residents, which mirror rates in the Coastal region. It is important to note that recent county level data on uninsured populations does not account for the changes brought about by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. It is not clear how that policy has affected uninsured rates in regions across the state.

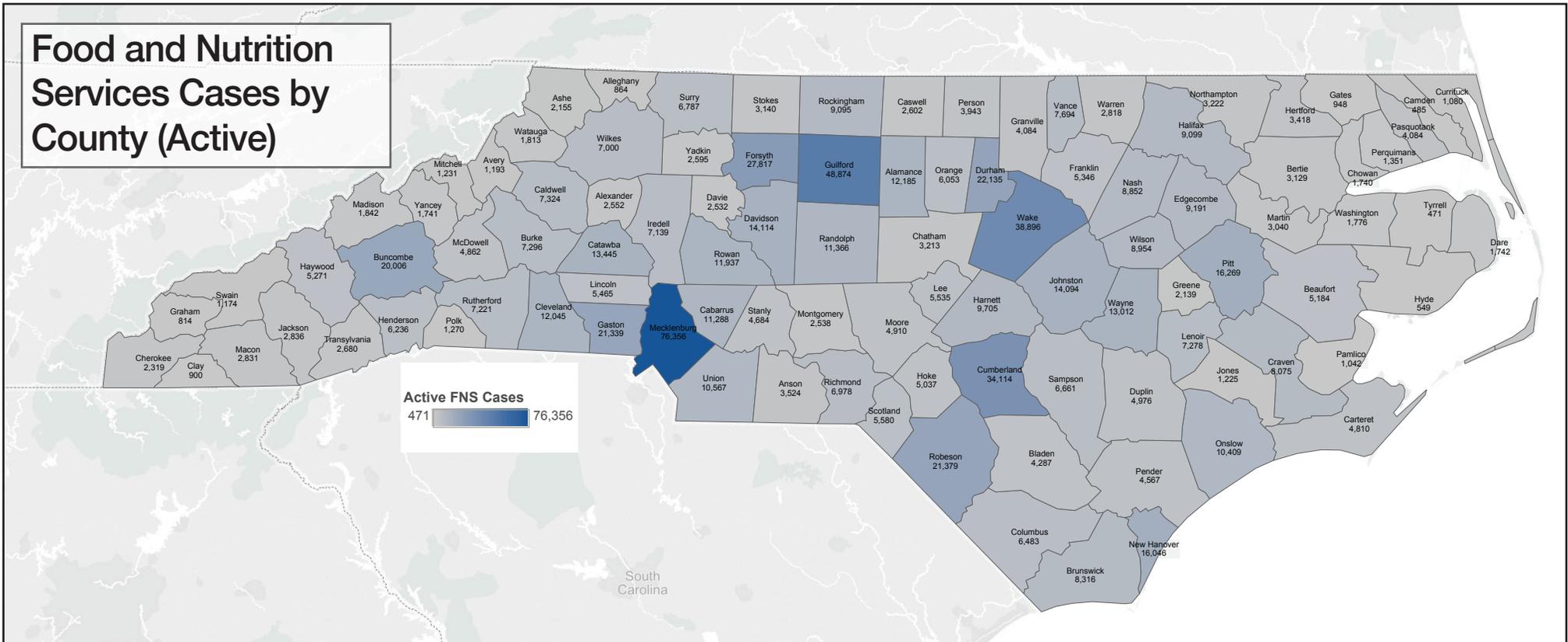
CHAPTER 3 - HHS (OVERALL HEALTH OUTCOME RANKINGS)

County Health Rankings



CHAPTER 3 - HHS (POVERTY AND HUNGER)

Food and Nutrition Services Cases by County (Active)

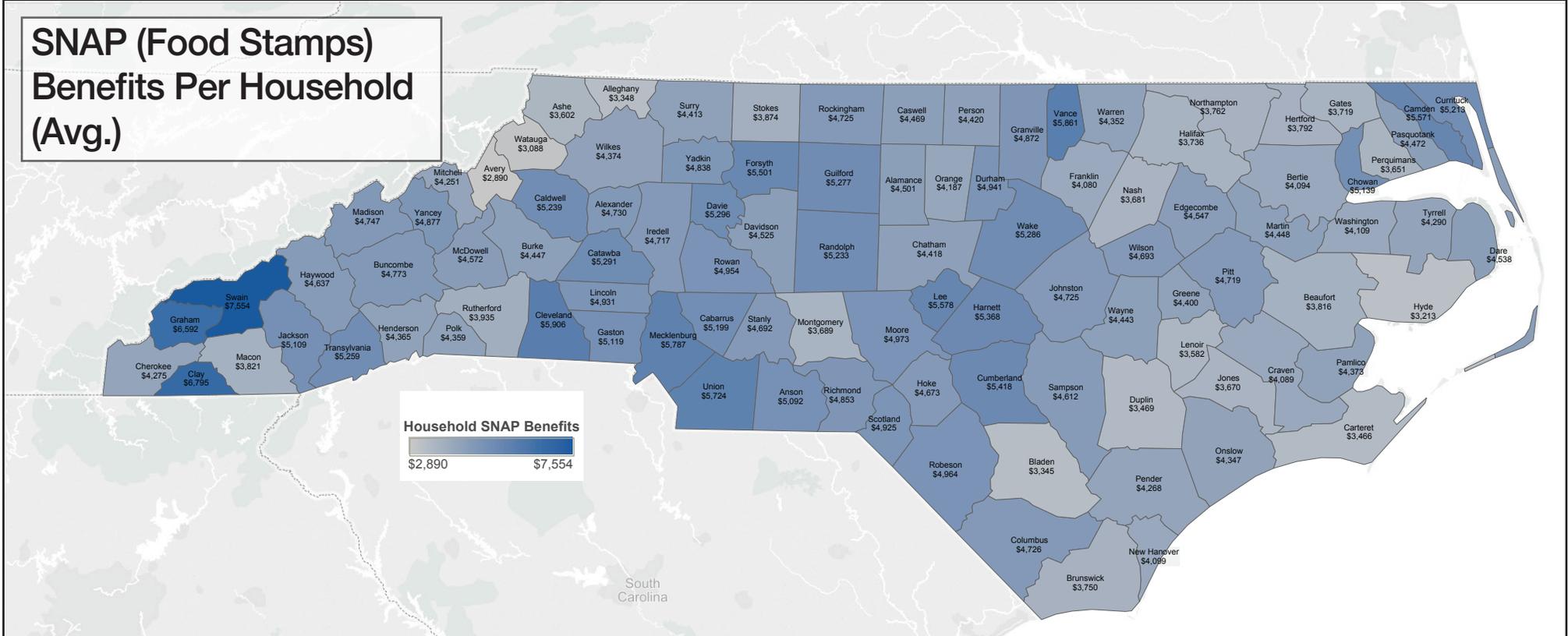


Explanation: Number of county residents enrolled in Food and Nutrition Services

Source: North Carolina Division of Social Services Program Statistics and Reviews, FNS Case Data (as of June 2015)

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (POVERTY AND HUNGER)

SNAP (Food Stamps) Benefits Per Household (Avg.)

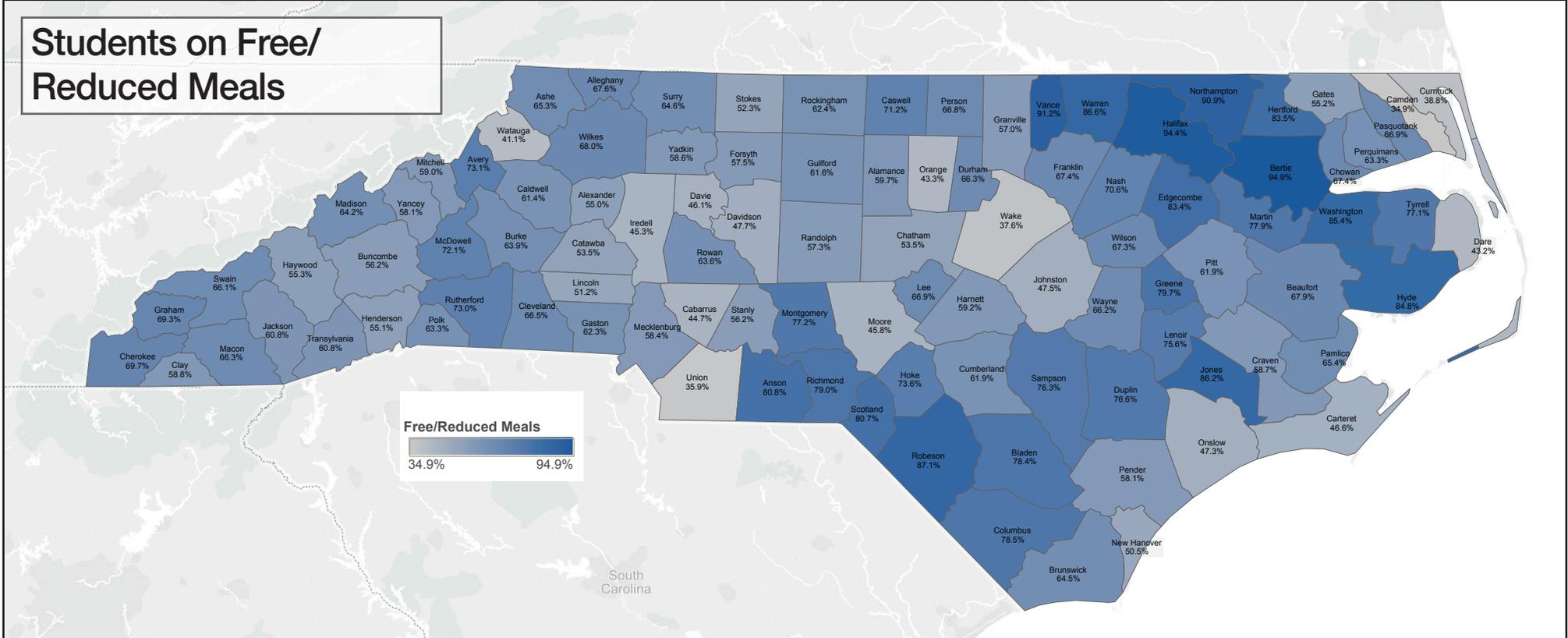


Explanation: Average Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) transfer per SNAP recipient household

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Personal Current Transfer Receipts Data, 2013; National Association of Counties

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (POVERTY AND HUNGER)

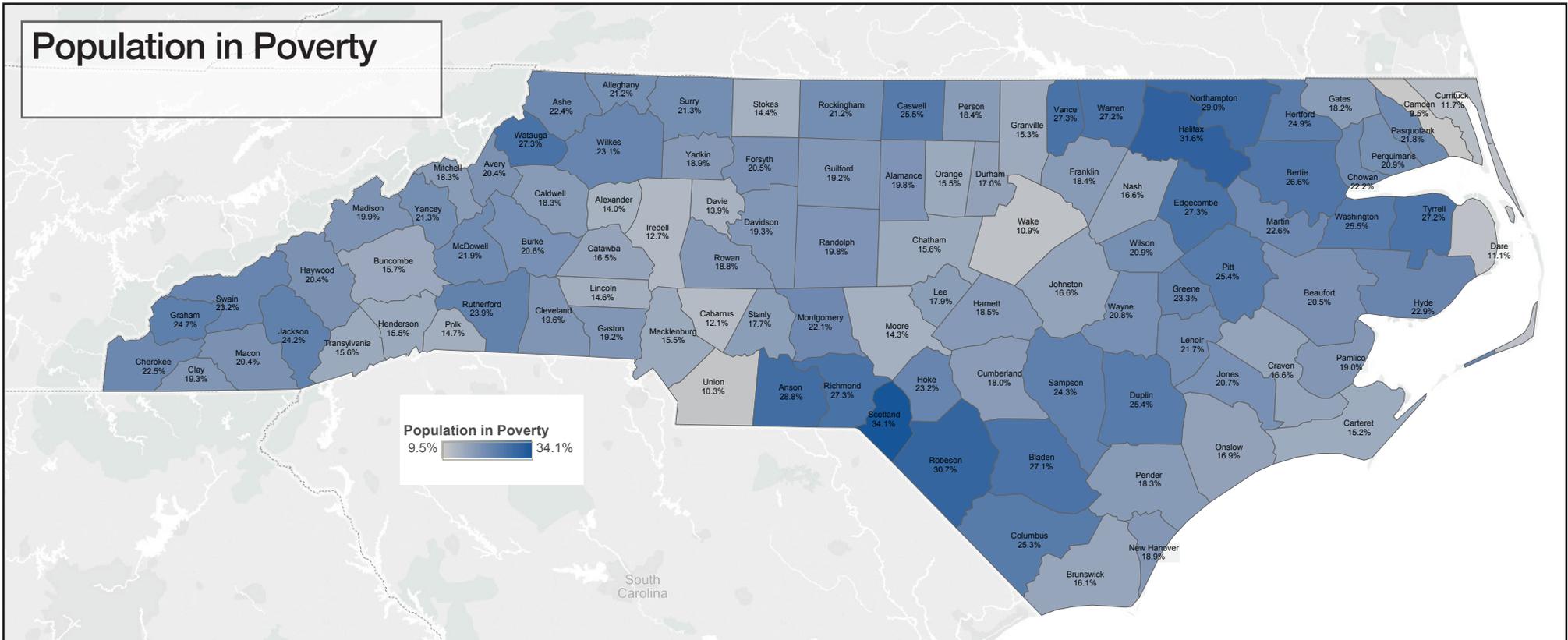
Students on Free/ Reduced Meals



Explanation: Final average daily membership (ADM) divided by the local educational agency's (LEA) number of free and reduced meal applications

Source: Department of Public Instruction, Data & Reports (2013-2014)

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (POVERTY AND HUNGER)

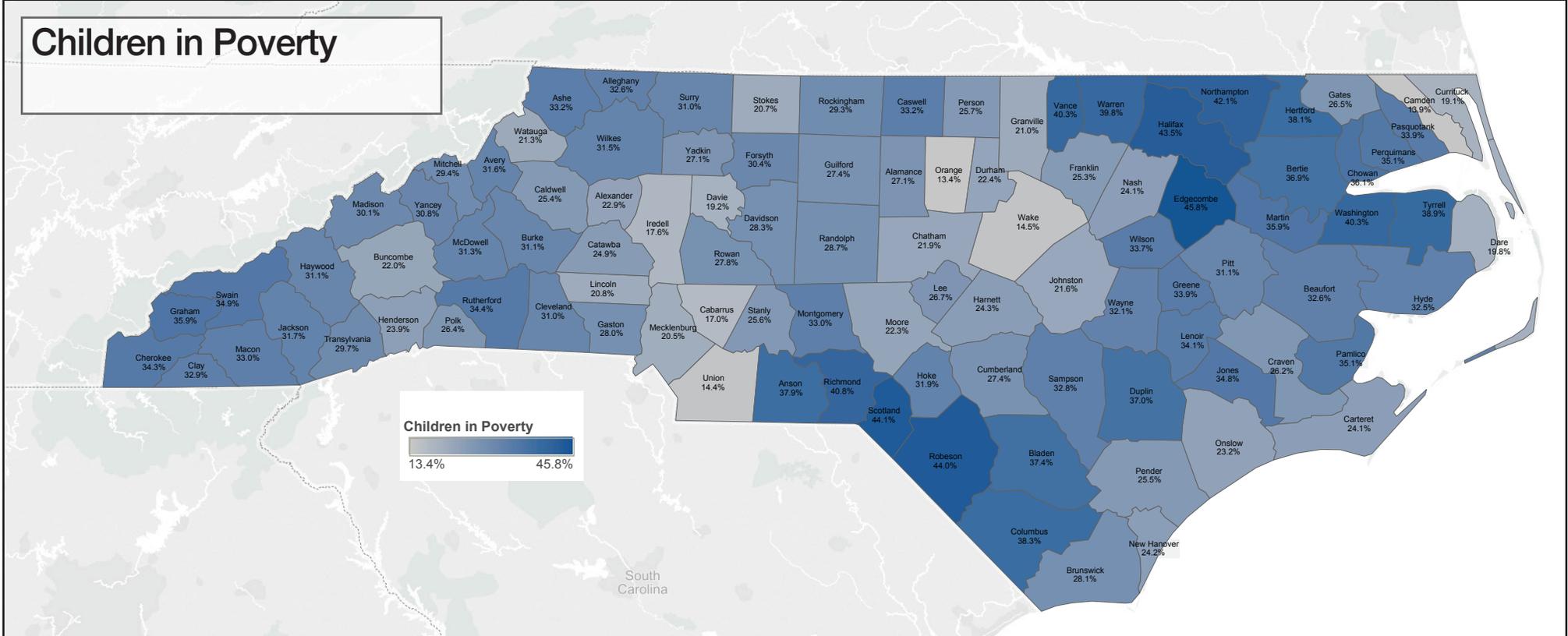


Explanation: Percentage of total number of people in the county living in poverty

Source: U.S Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates 2013

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (POVERTY AND HUNGER)

Children in Poverty

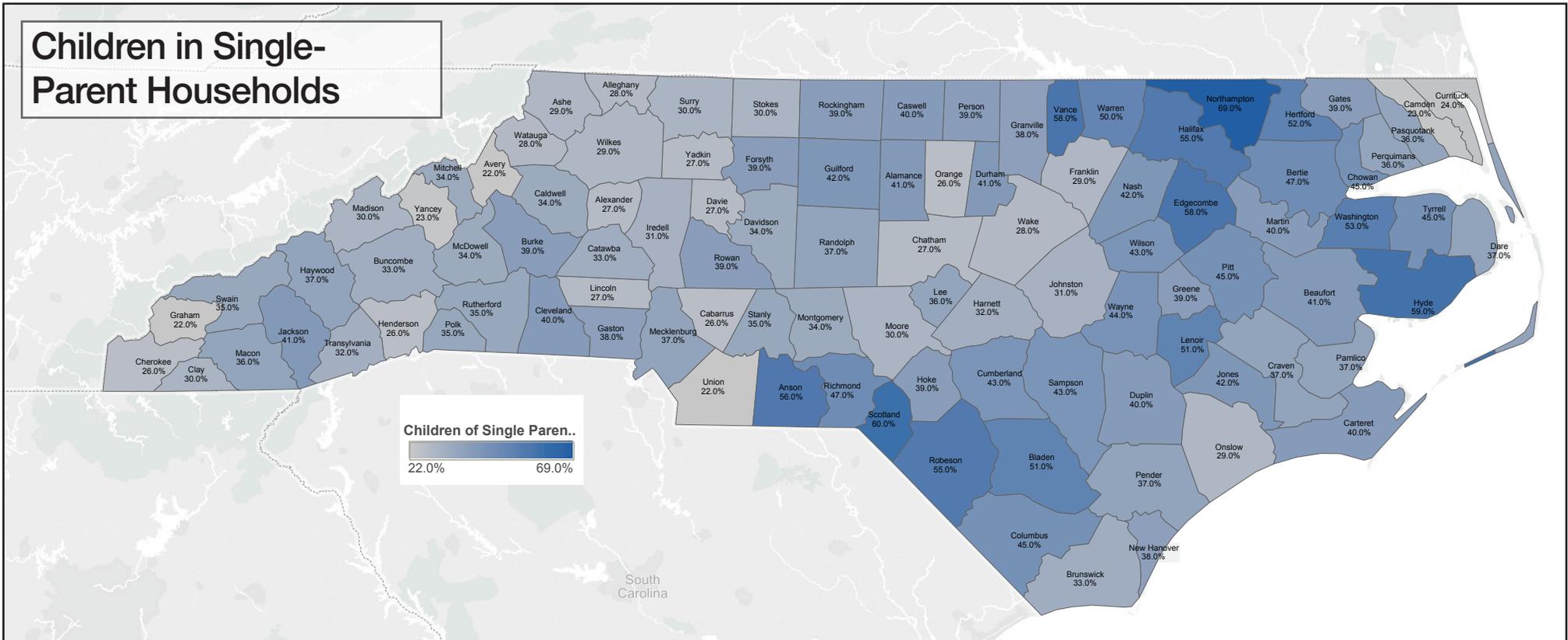


Explanation: Percentage of children under the age of 18 in the county in families living in poverty

Source: U.S Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates 2013

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (FAMILY STRUCTURE)

Children in Single-Parent Households

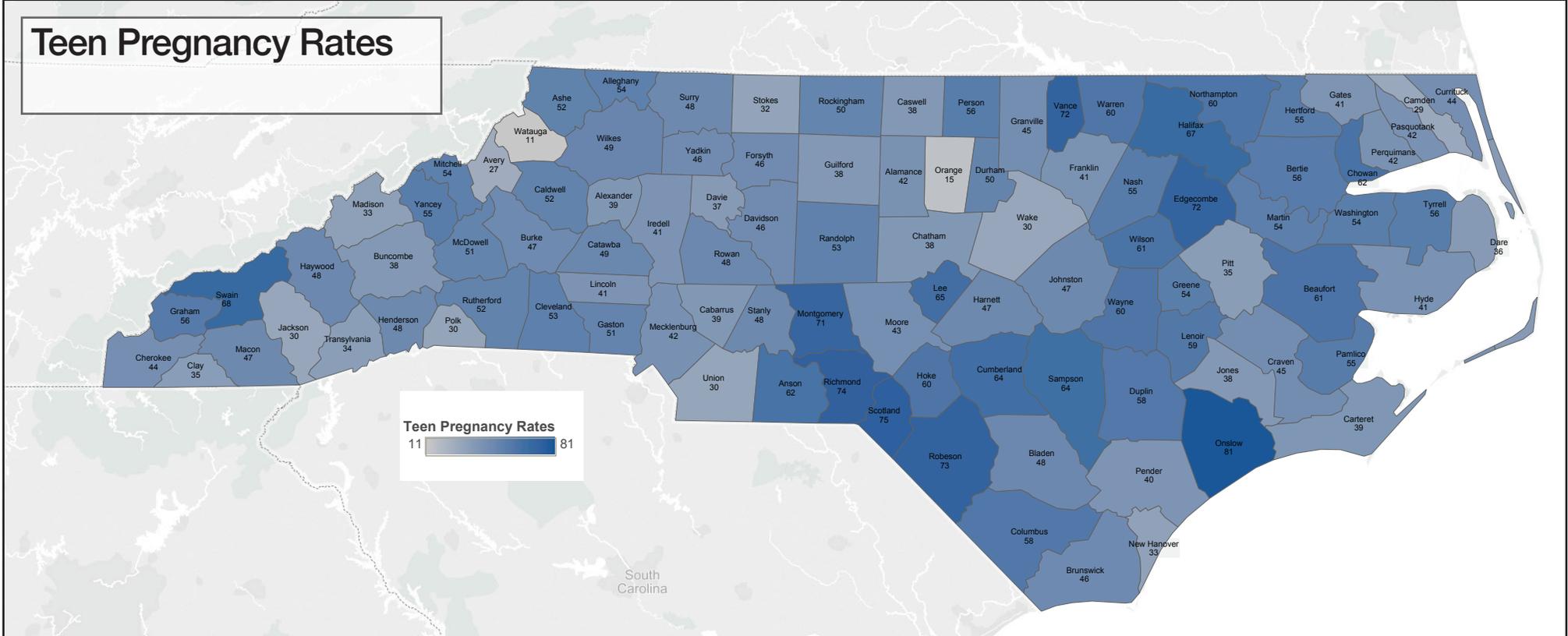


Explanation: Percentage of children who live in a household headed by a single parent (male or female head of household with no spouse present)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (FAMILY STRUCTURE)

Teen Pregnancy Rates

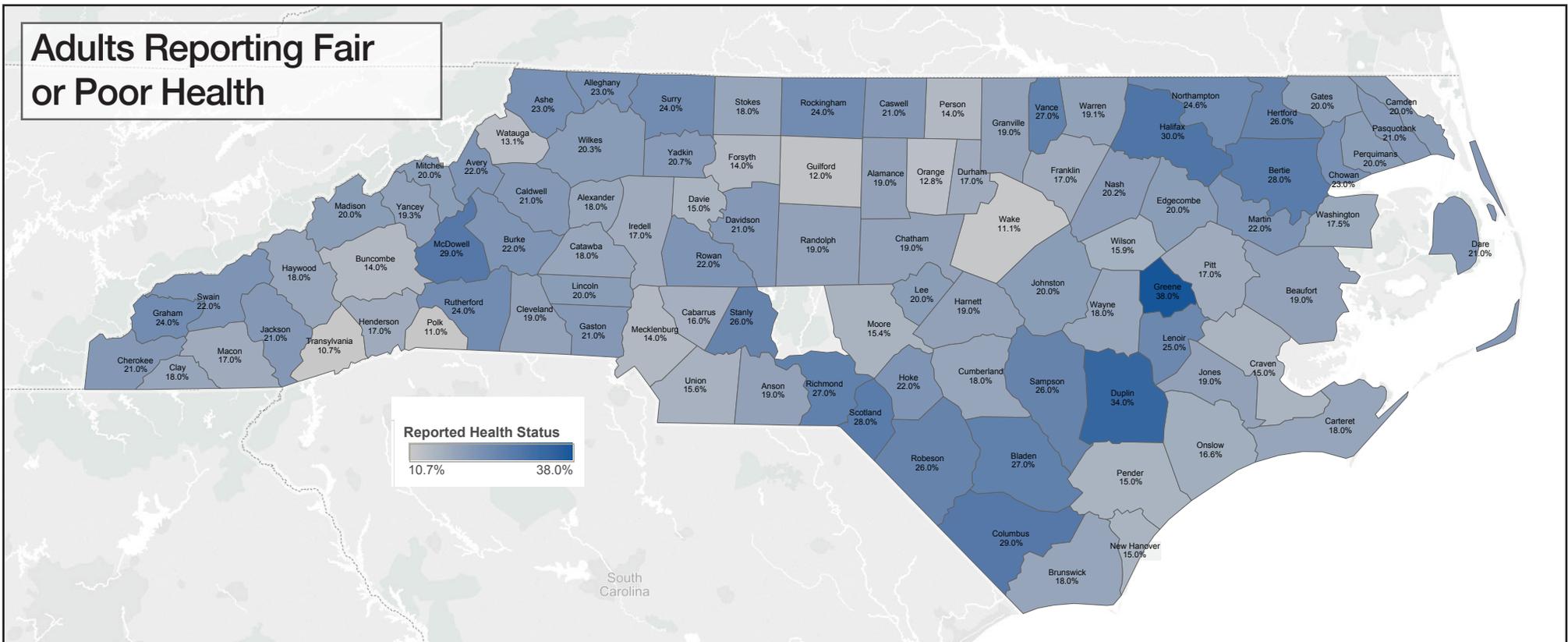


Explanation: Average rate of teen pregnancies (ages 15-19) per 1,000 female residents in the county between 2009 and 2013 (values were rounded to nearest whole number)

Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (HEALTH BEHAVIORS)

Adults Reporting Fair or Poor Health



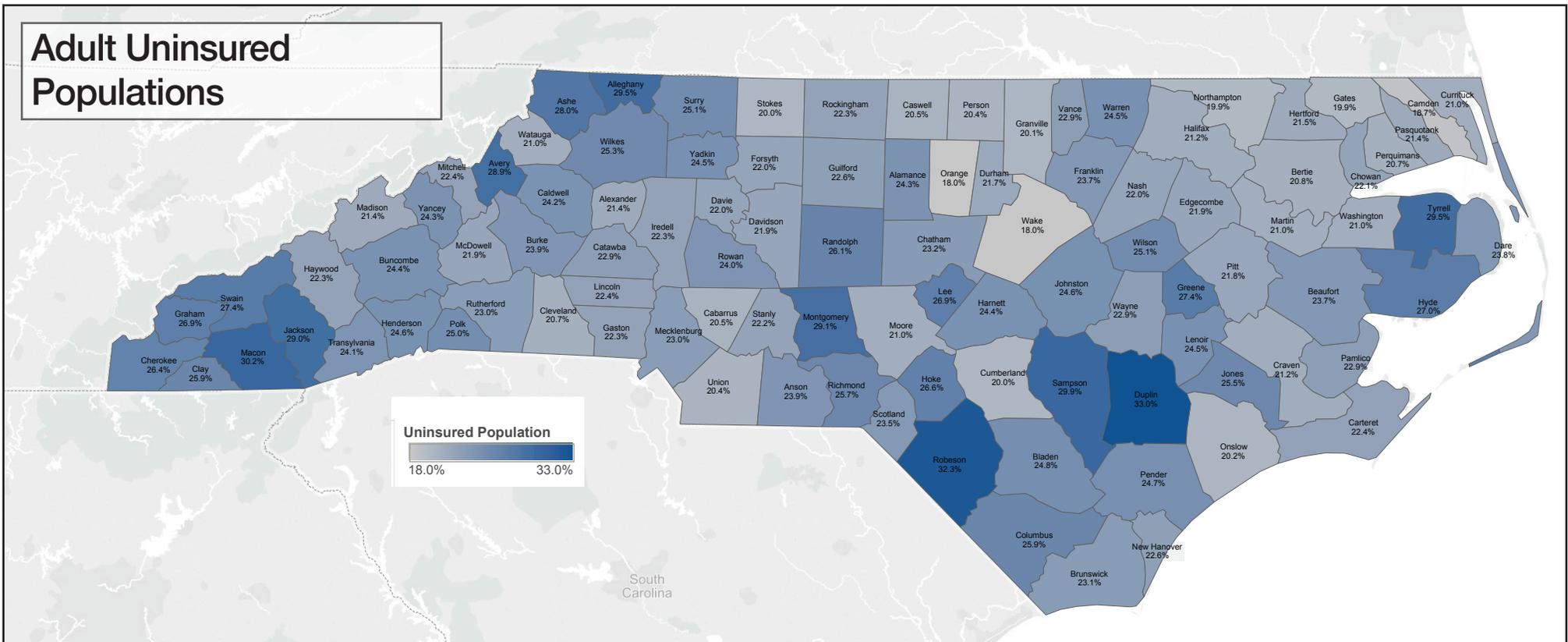
Explanation: Percentage of adults who rated their health as “fair” or “poor”

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2006-2012; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings

Note: Counties for which data were unavailable were excluded from the map.

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (HEALTH BEHAVIORS)

Adult Uninsured Populations

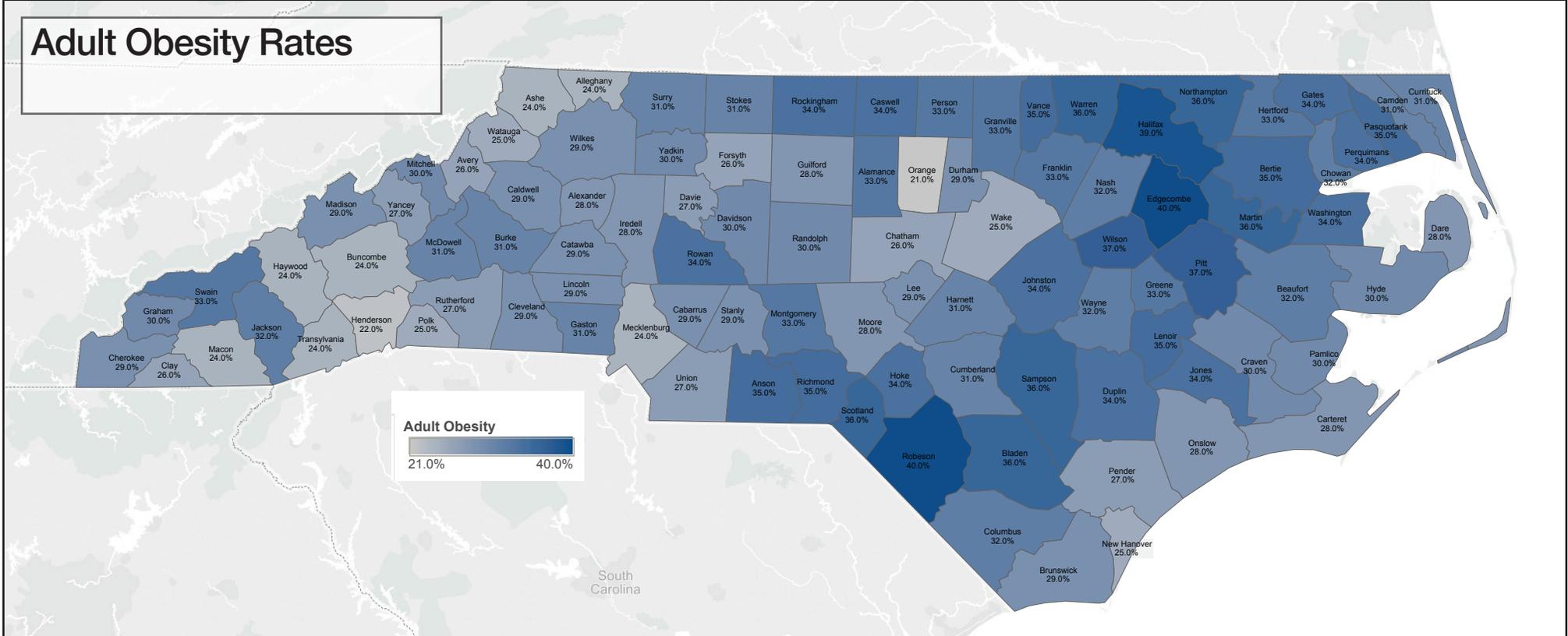


Explanation: Percentage of uninsured county residents ages 18-64

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates 2013

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (HEALTH BEHAVIORS)

Adult Obesity Rates



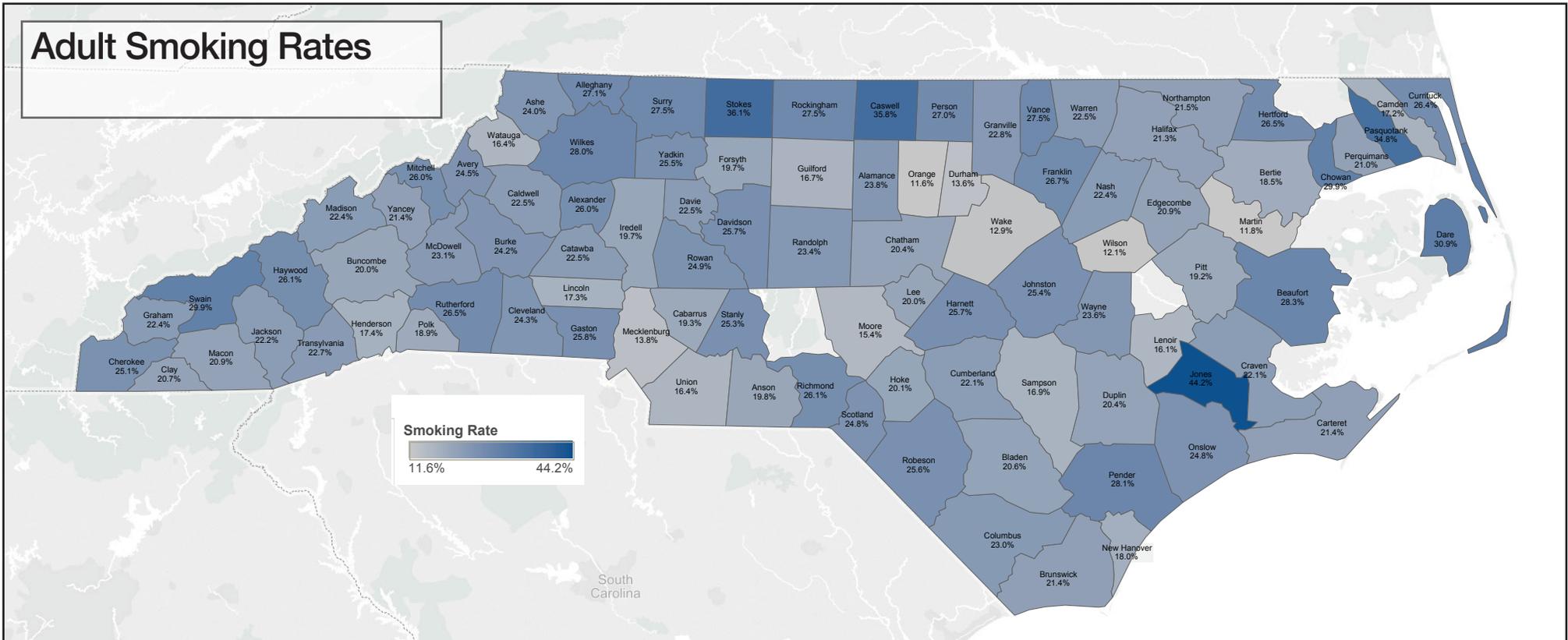
Explanation: Percentage of adults that reported a BMI of 30 or more

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program (2011); Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings

Note: Counties for which data were unavailable were excluded from the map.

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (HEALTH BEHAVIORS)

Adult Smoking Rates



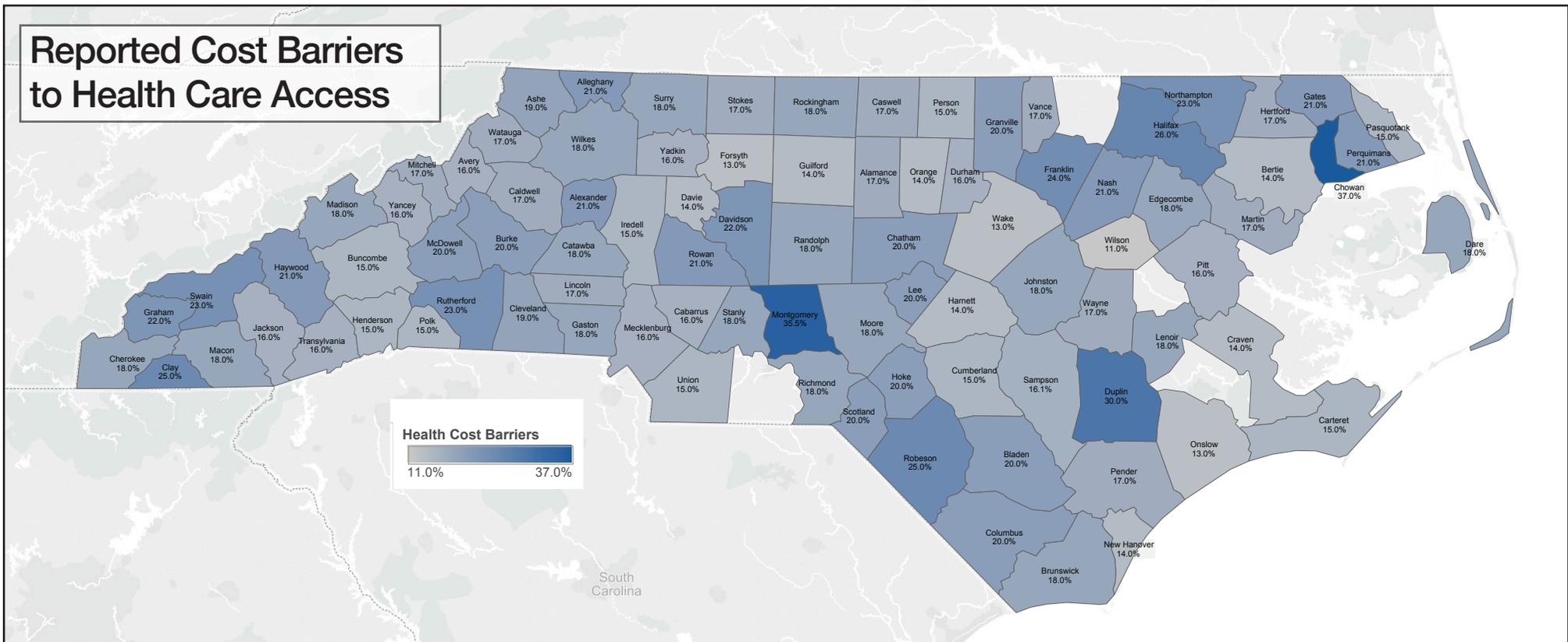
Explanation: Percentage of adults in the county that reported currently smoking

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2006-2012

Note: Counties for which data were unavailable were excluded from the map.

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (HEALTH ACCESS)

Reported Cost Barriers to Health Care Access



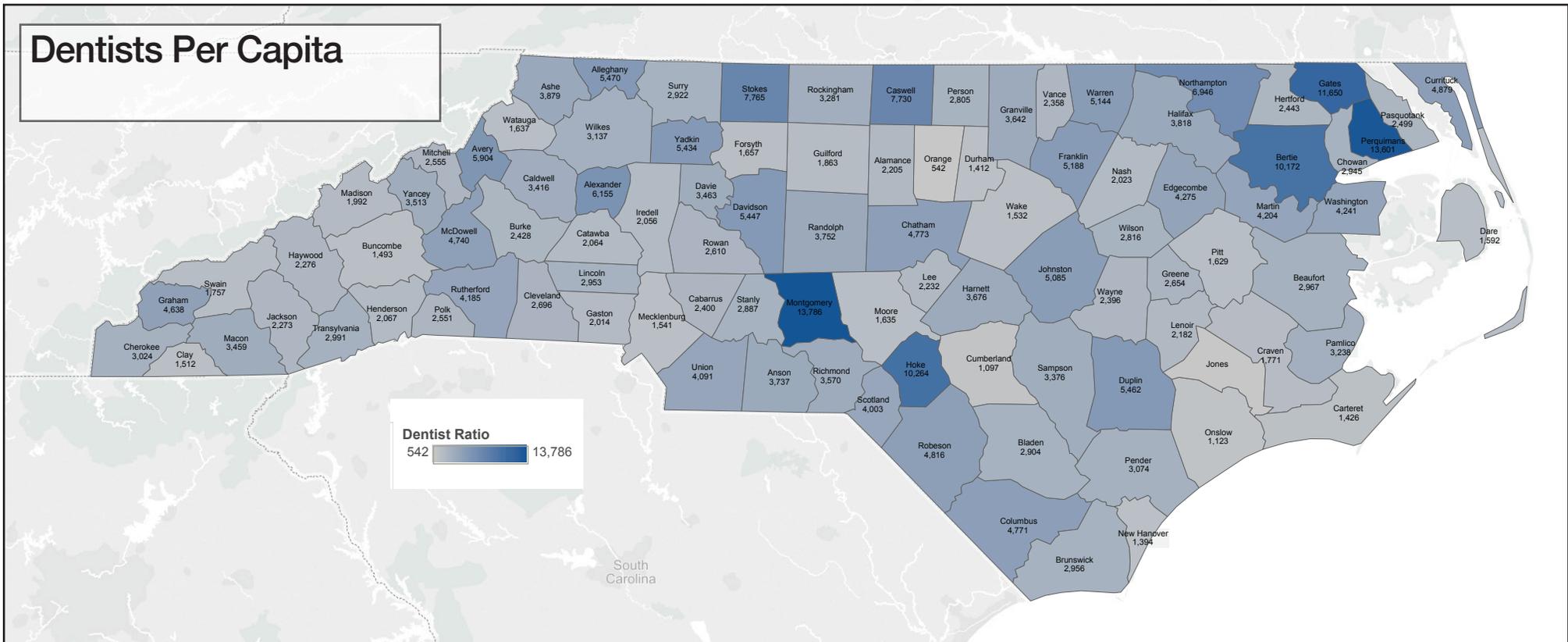
Explanation: Percentage of adults who could not see a doctor in the past 12 months due to cost

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2006-2012; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings

Note: Counties for which data were unavailable were excluded from the map.

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (HEALTH ACCESS)

Dentists Per Capita

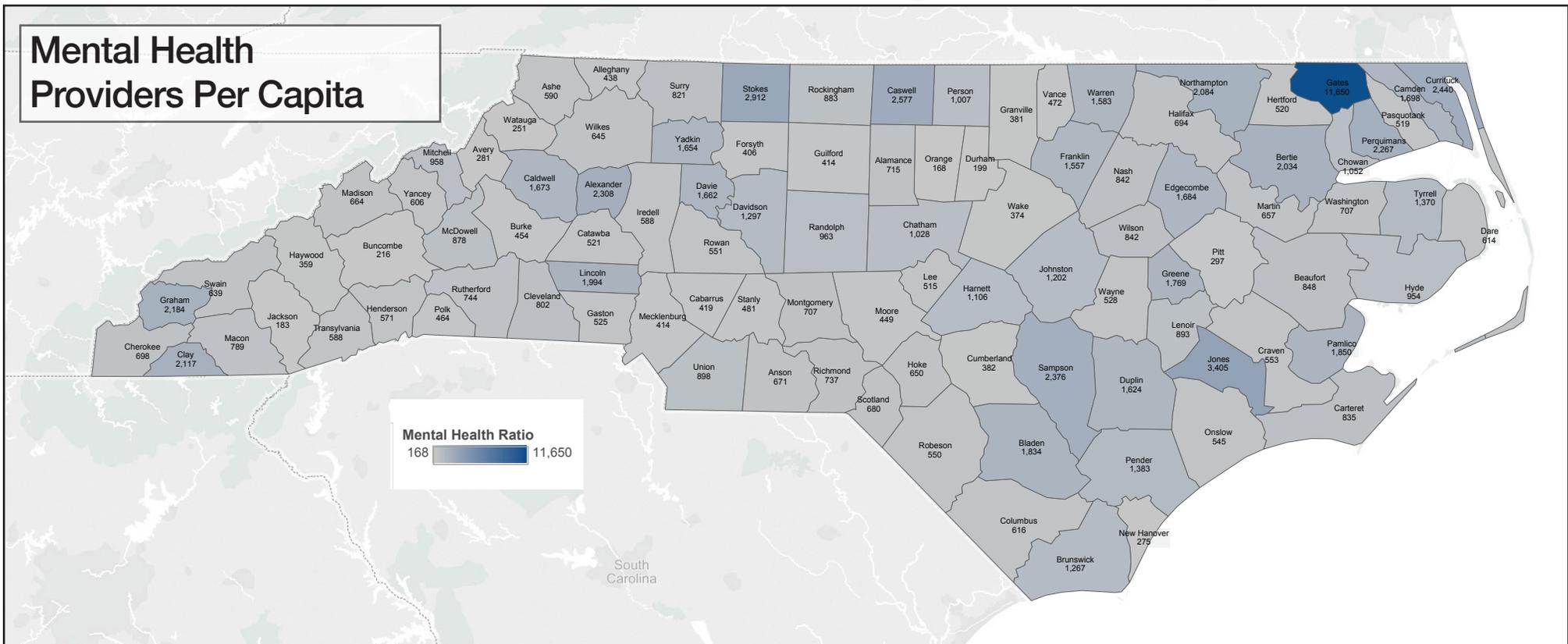


Explanation: Ratio of county residents per dentist

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Area Health Resource File 2013

Note: Counties for which data were unavailable were excluded from the map.

CHAPTER 3 - HHS (HEALTH ACCESS)



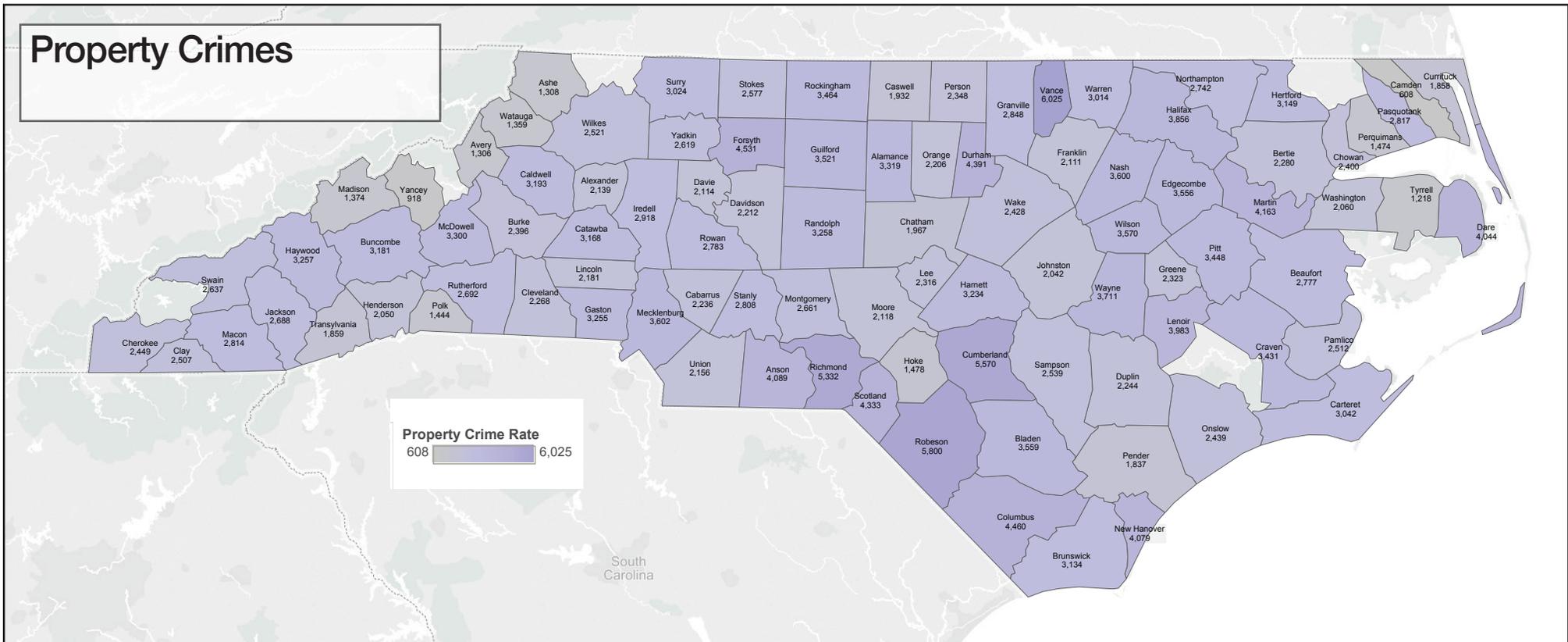
Explanation: Ratio of county residents per mental health provider

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, National Provider Identification 2014

CHAPTER 4 - JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The Sandhills region shows the strongest concentration of violent and property-related crimes, with high rates also present in Vance County, as well as more populous counties. There are Mountain region counties with populations comparable to some I-95 corridor counties and similarly high property and violent crime rates. However, their crime rates are not as high as they are in the I-95 corridor, nor are there as many “high-crime” Mountain counties as there are “high-crime” I-95 corridor counties. The Sandhills region does stand out in terms of food insecurity, percentages of children and total population in poverty, and unemployment rates, which may point to a correlational relationship. However, the presence of those factors alone is not sufficient to claim a causal link.

CHAPTER 4 - JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY



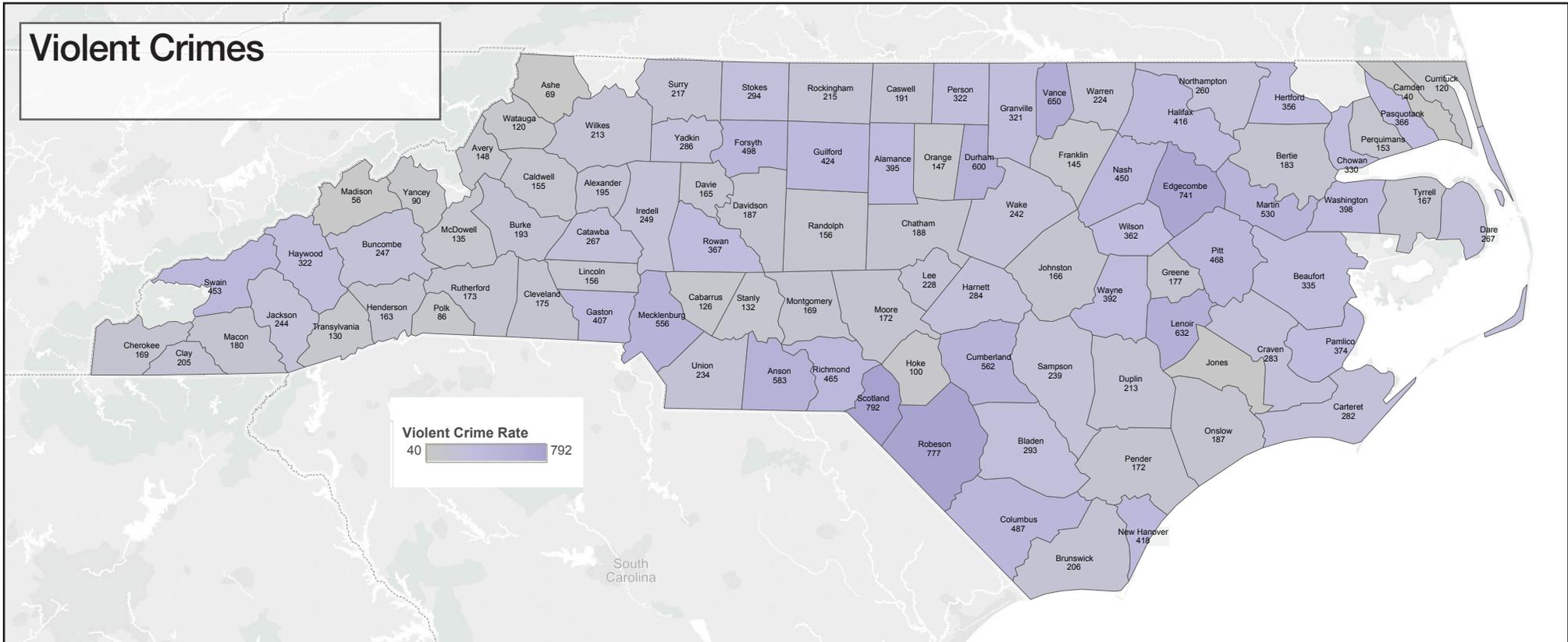
Explanation: Rate of property crimes (including burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson) per 100,000 people in the county (values were rounded to nearest whole number)

Source: North Carolina Department of Justice, 2013 Annual Summary Report

Note: Counties for which data were unavailable were excluded from the map.

CHAPTER 4 - JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Violent Crimes



Explanation: Rate of violent crimes (including murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) per 100,000 people in the county (values were rounded to nearest whole number)

Source: North Carolina Department of Justice, 2013 Annual Summary Report

Note: Counties for which data were unavailable were excluded from the map.

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

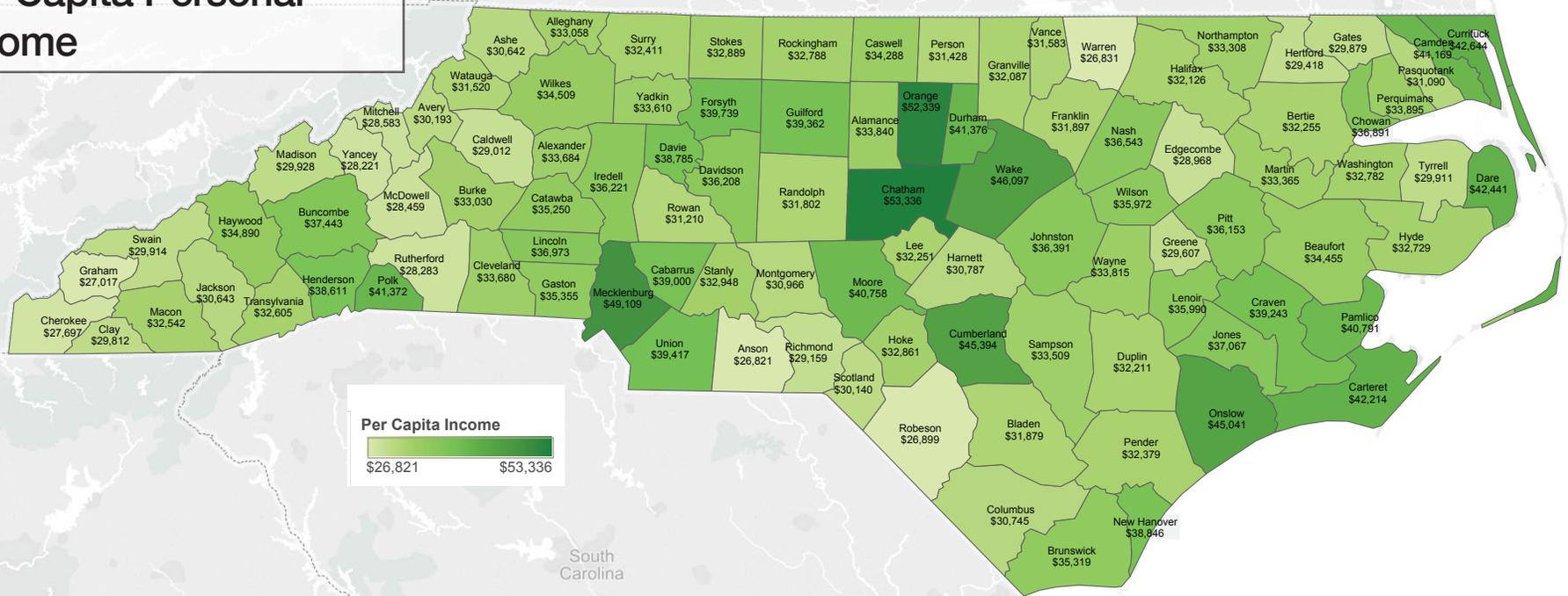
As one might expect, Mecklenburg and the Central section of the Piedmont region have shown the most robust economic performance, according to the listed indicators. They boast some of the highest housing values, job growth rates, per capita incomes, and rates of residents' educational attainment, as well as the lowest unemployment rates. As a point of context, these areas also require the highest living wages, compared to many of the Mountain and northern counties—Currituck being the exception.

Aside from those aforementioned areas, few counties in the state have recovered to their pre-Recession level of jobs, with the vast majority of counties still lagging. Notably, while the westernmost Mountain counties and the southernmost Coastal counties have had relatively strong job growth numbers between 2013 and 2014, their unemployment rates still remain high in comparison to the national rate of 5.3 percent.

In terms of where county residents are working, most Piedmont residents work in counties other than the one in which they reside, with Mountain and Coastal county residents mostly working in their county of residence. The data do not indicate which counties residents are commuting for work. However, Mecklenburg, Cumberland, Wake, Onslow, New Hanover, Guilford, Forsyth and Pitt stand out as having the highest proportion of residents working in county versus working out of county.

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYMENT & HOUSEHOLD WEALTH)

Per Capita Personal Income

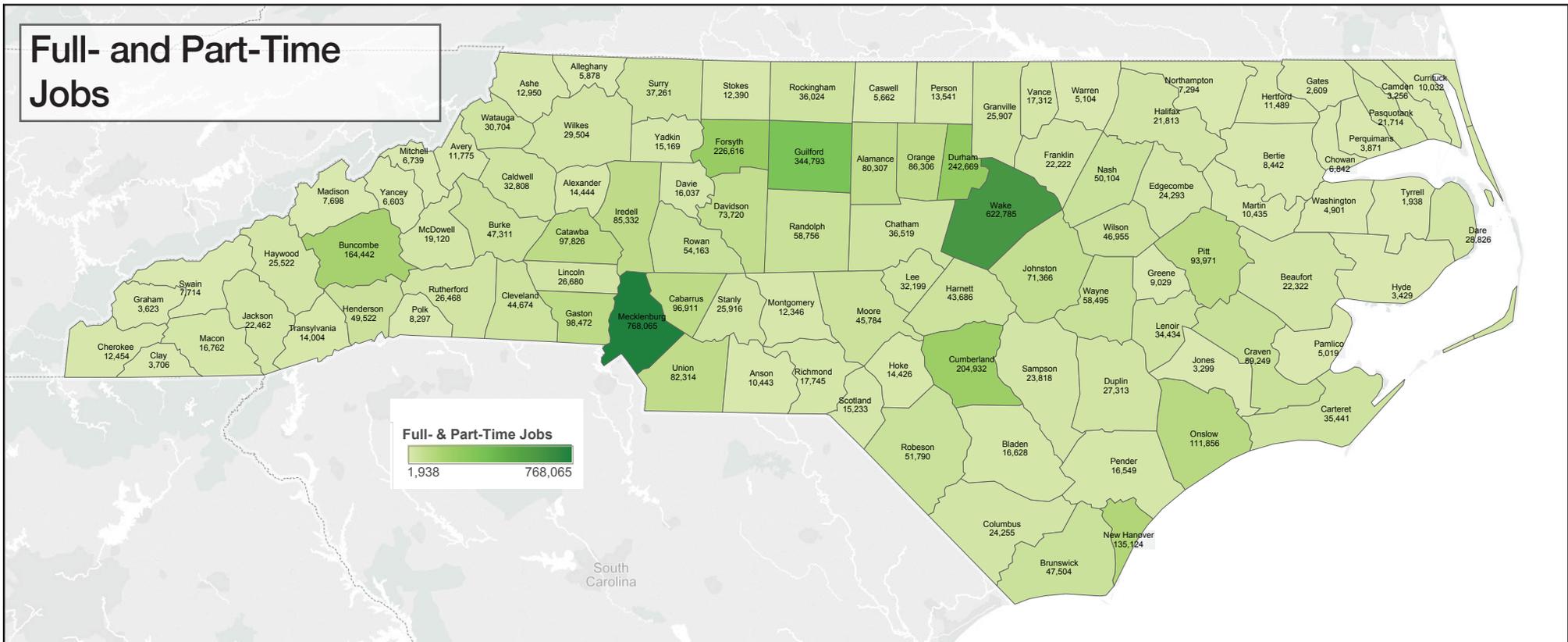


Explanation: Measure of income calculated as the total personal income of an area's residents divided by the population of the area

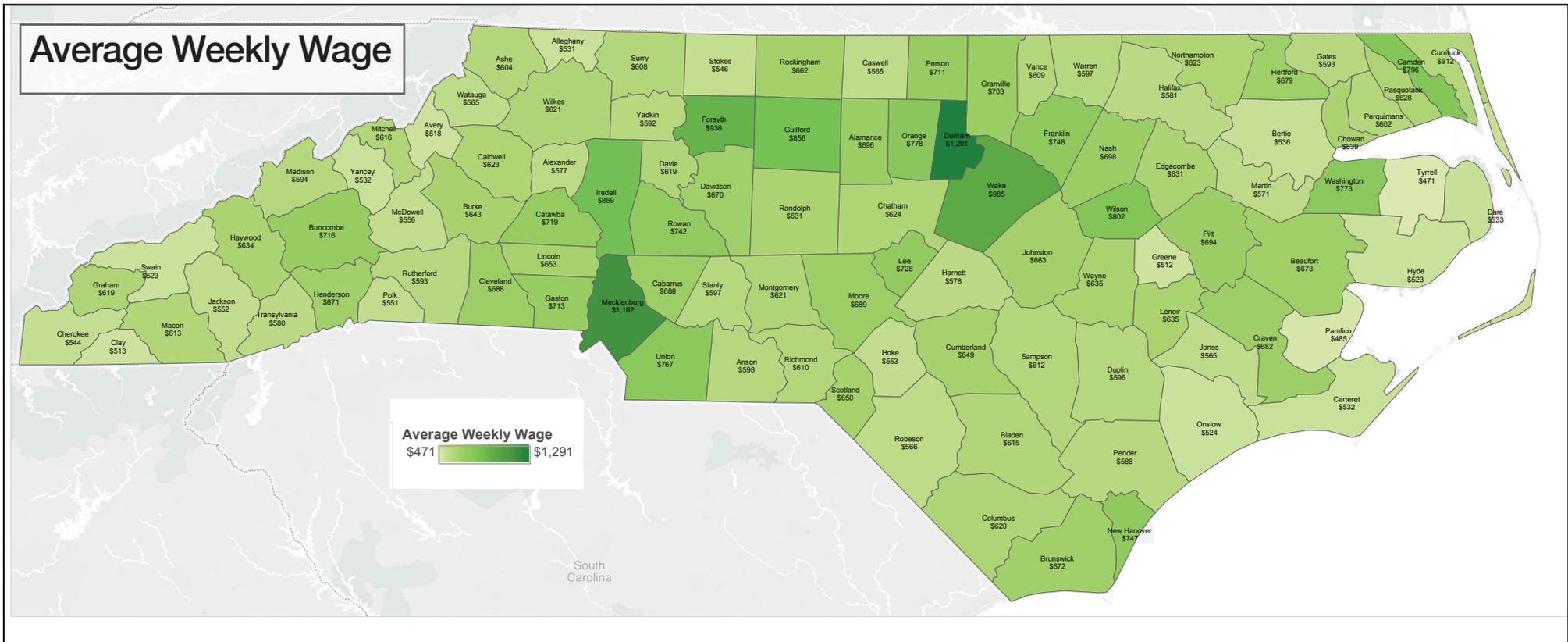
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Data, Local Area Personal Income and Employment -- 2013 data

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYMENT & HOUSEHOLD WEALTH)

Full- and Part-Time Jobs



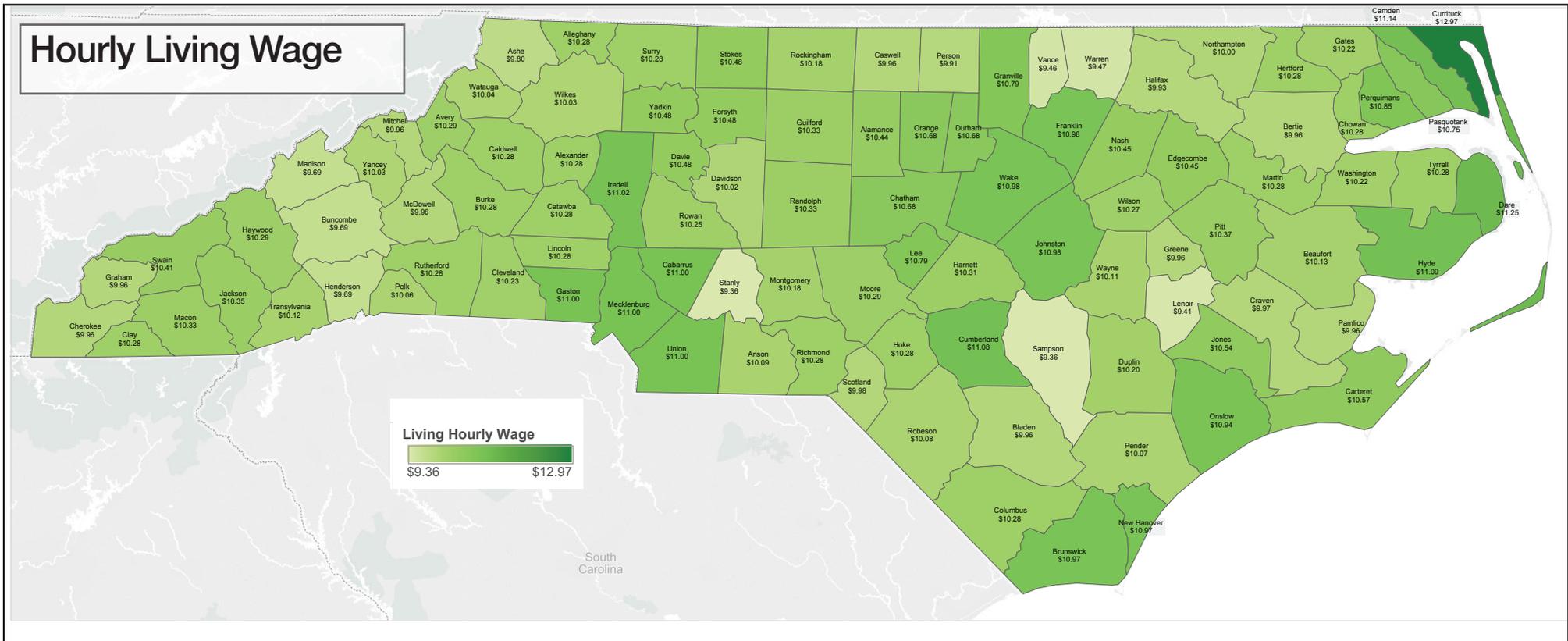
CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYMENT & HOUSEHOLD WEALTH)



Explanation: Average weekly wage in the county, averaged over the year

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (2014)*

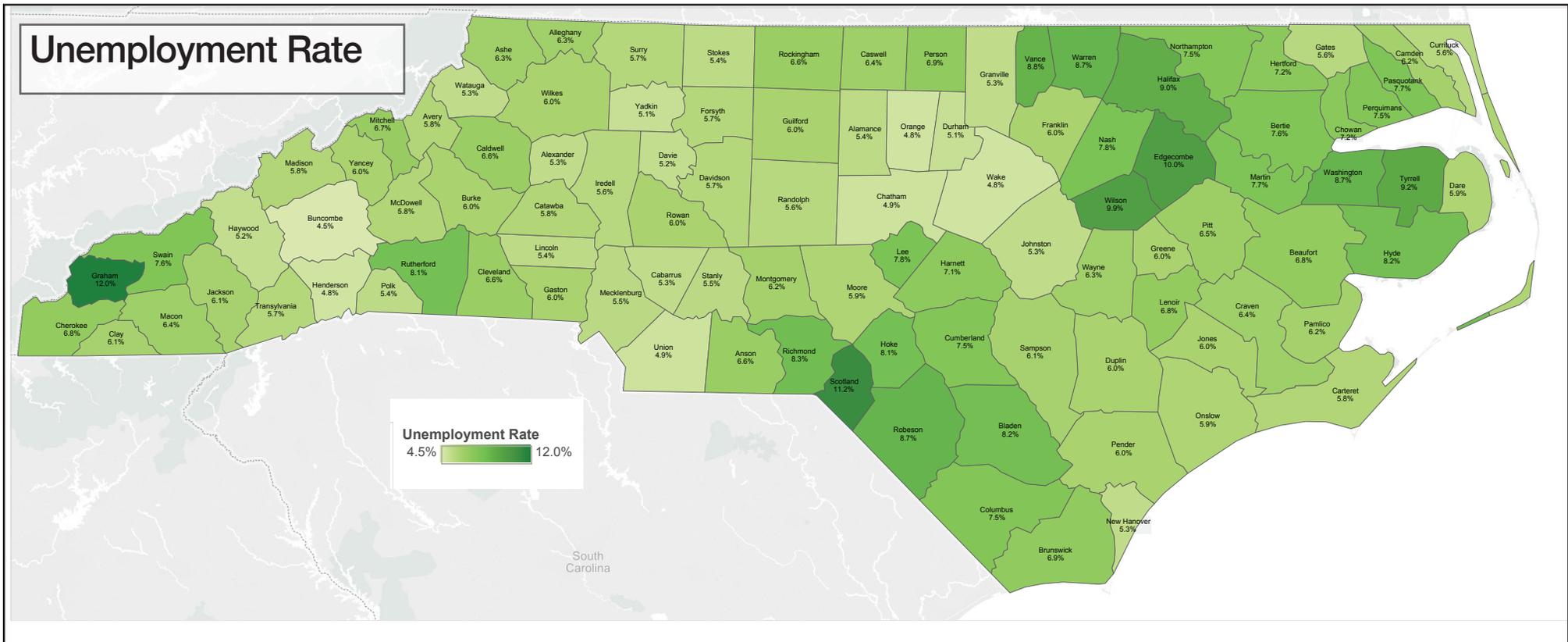
CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYMENT & HOUSEHOLD WEALTH)



Explanation: Living wage that an individual must earn to support him or herself in the county, given that they are working full-time.

Source: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator (values reported in 2014 dollars)

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYMENT & HOUSEHOLD WEALTH)

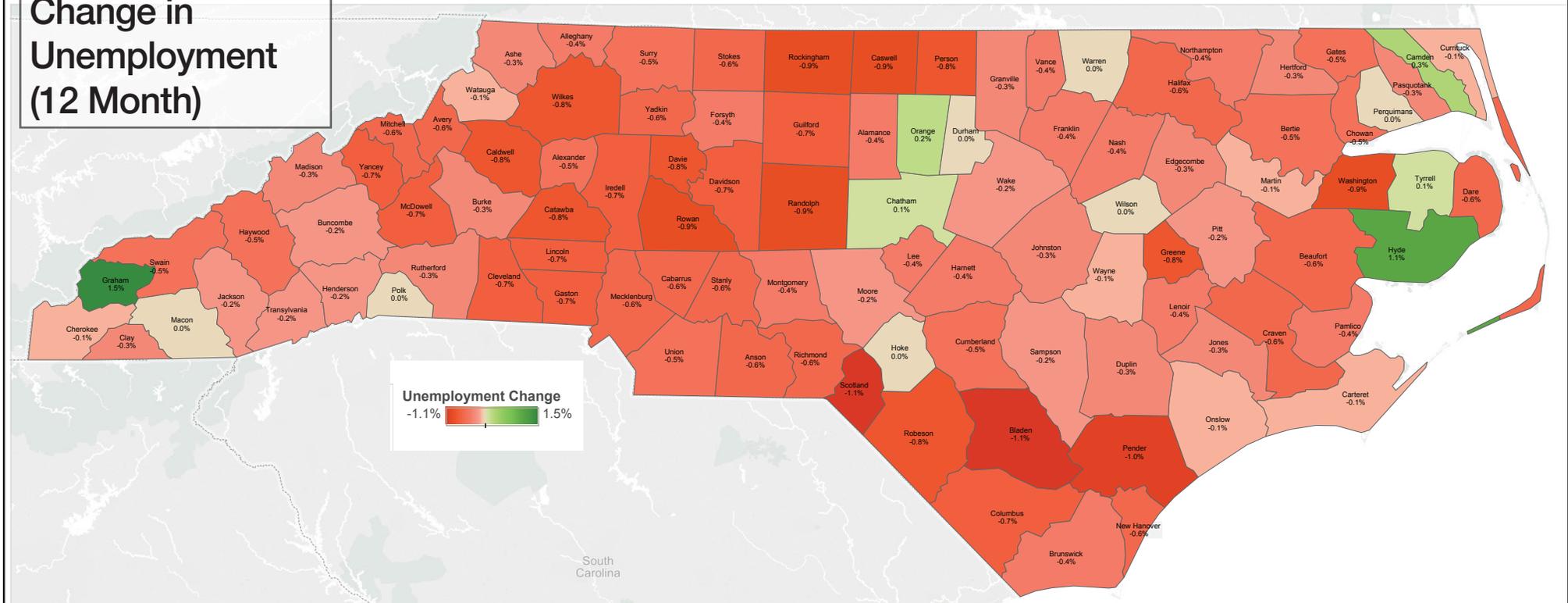


Explanation: Ratio of unemployed to the civilian labor force expressed as a percent

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map (as of May 2015)

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYMENT & HOUSEHOLD WEALTH)

Change in Unemployment (12 Month)

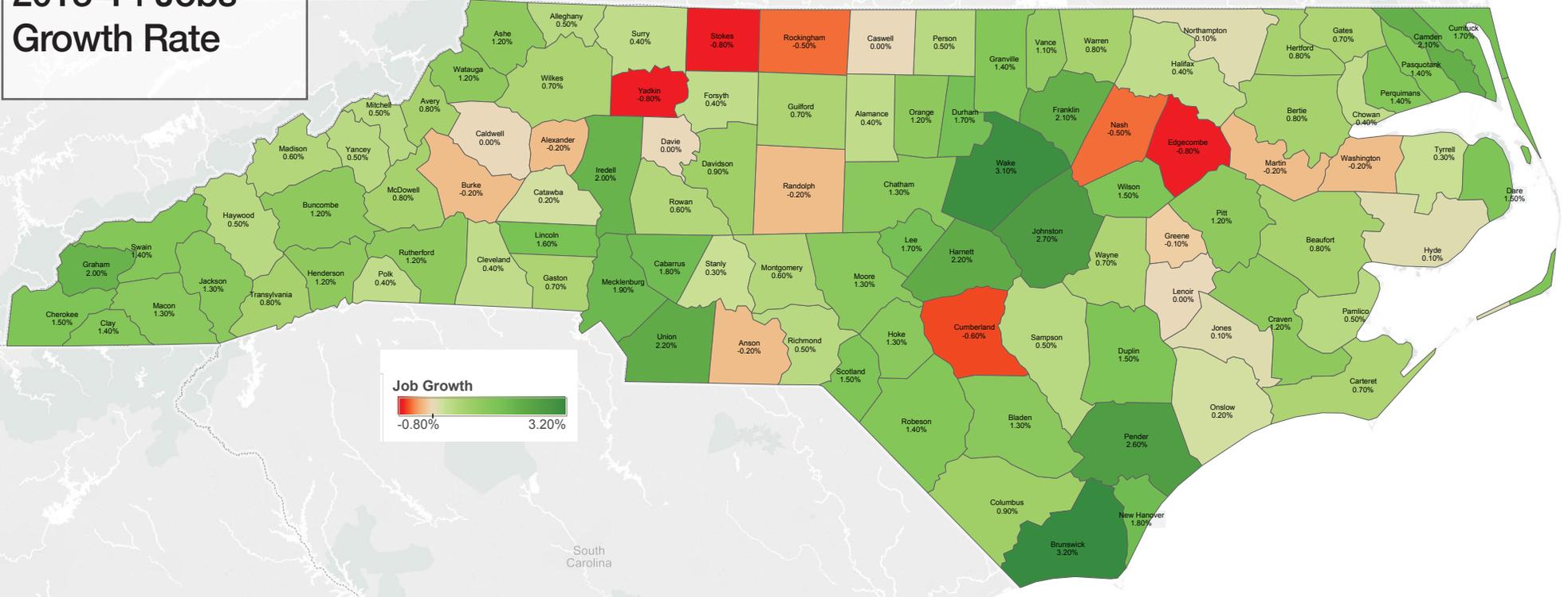


Explanation: 12-month net change in unemployment rate from May 2014 to May 2015

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map (as of May 2015)

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYMENT & HOUSEHOLD WEALTH)

2013-14 Jobs Growth Rate

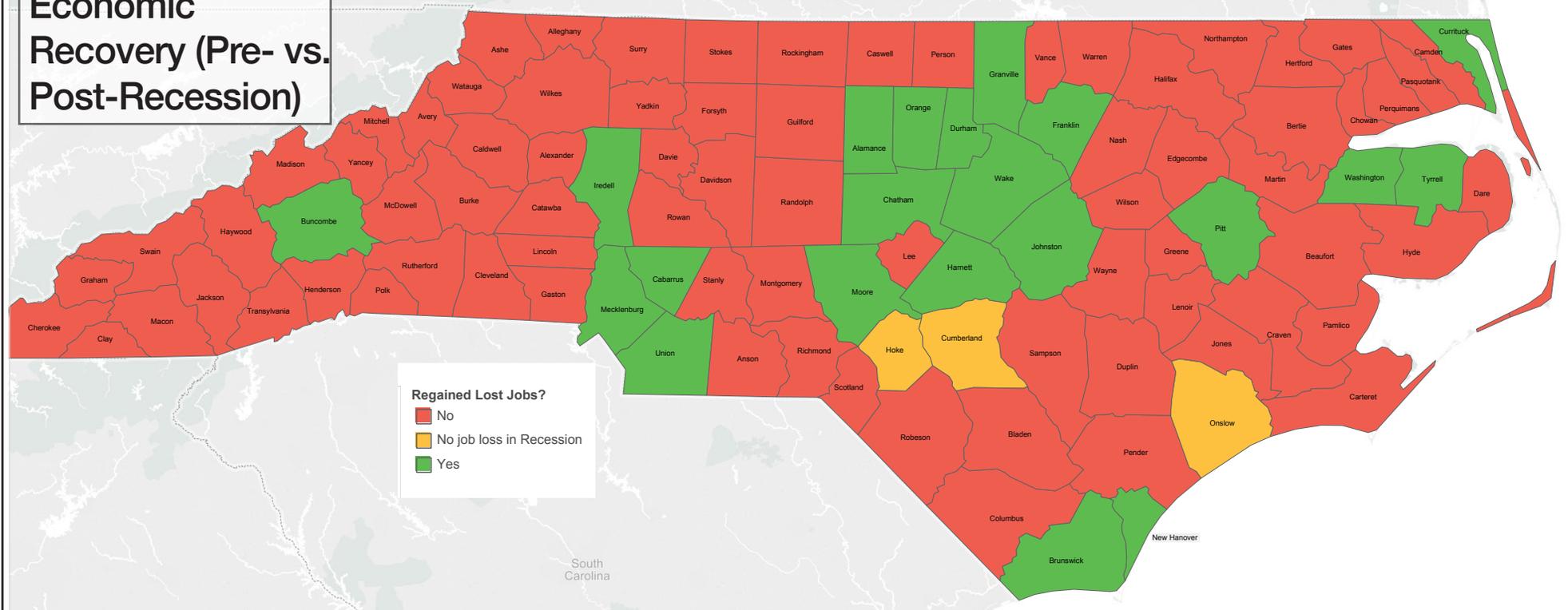


Explanation: Year-over-year total jobs growth rate, representing both full- and part-time jobs. Total jobs, not employed people, are counted.

Source: Moody's Analytics; National Association of Counties 2014

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYMENT & HOUSEHOLD WEALTH)

Economic Recovery (Pre- vs. Post-Recession)

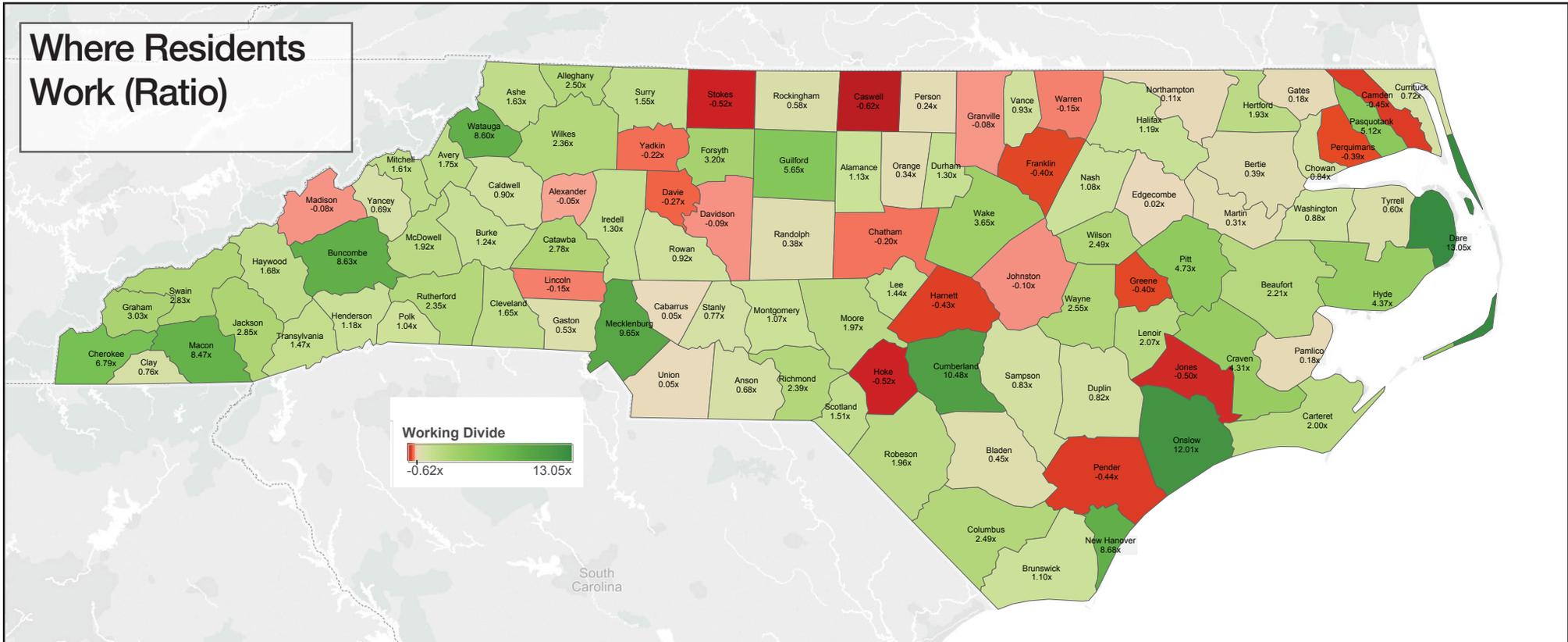


Explanation: Has the county recovered to its pre-Recession level of jobs by 2014? Total jobs, not employed people, are counted.

Source: Moody's Analytics; National Association of Counties 2014

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS)

Where Residents Work (Ratio)

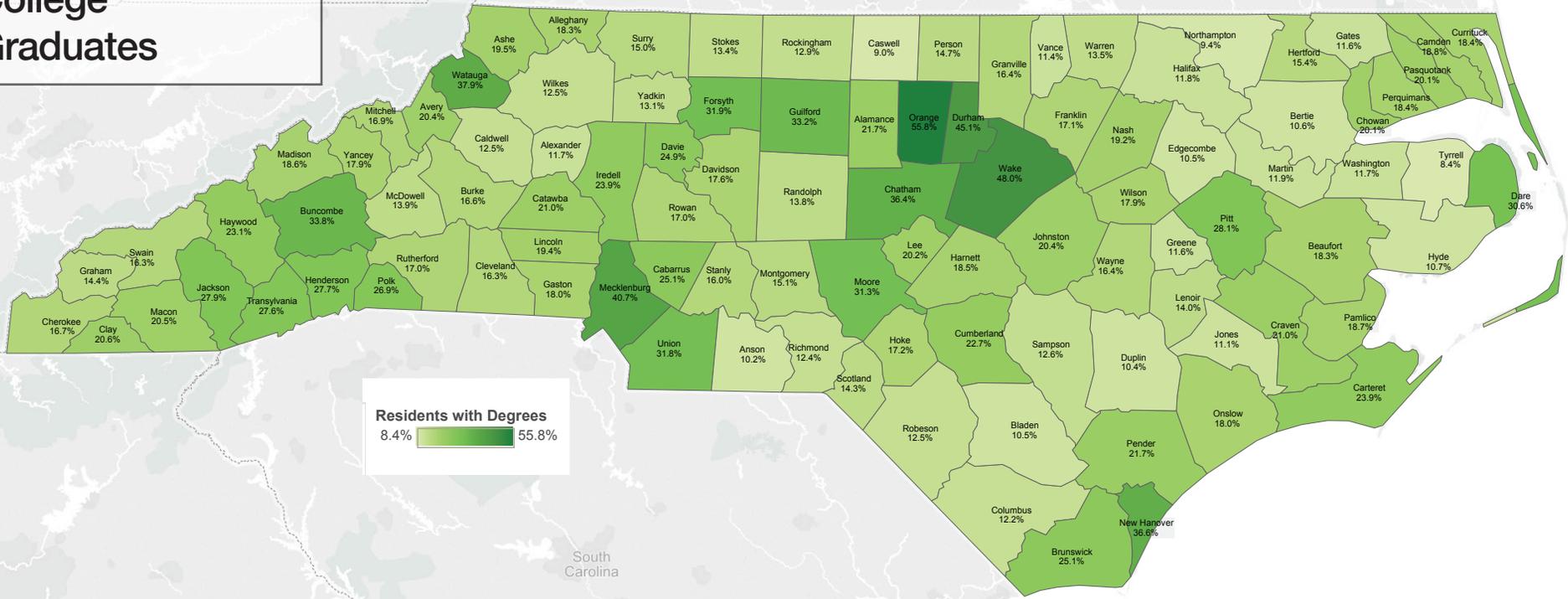


Explanation: Ratio of the county's residents who work in their county of residence, versus those who work in another county. A figure of 0.0 indicates that the numbers of both groups are the same size. For example, a county with a figure of 2.0 would have 2x as many of its residents working in county as it has residents working in another county. A negative number indicates that more residents work in another county.

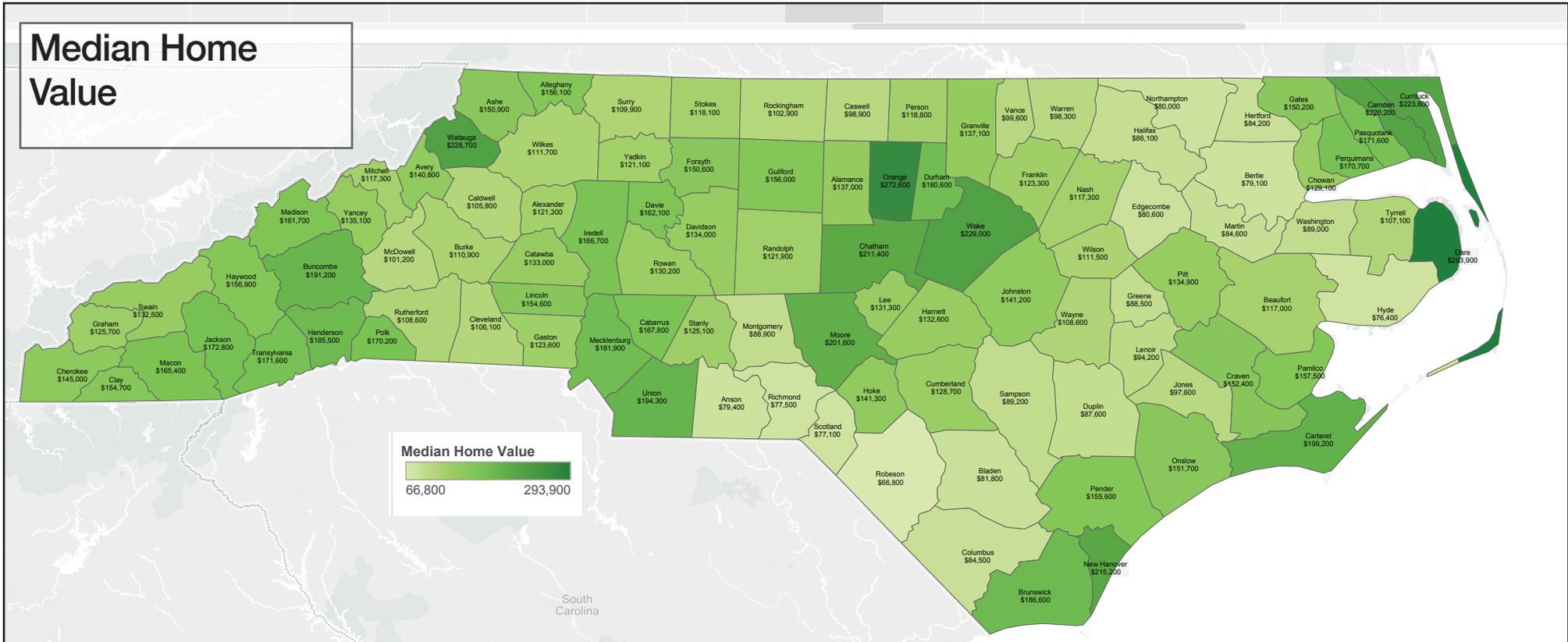
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS)

College Graduates



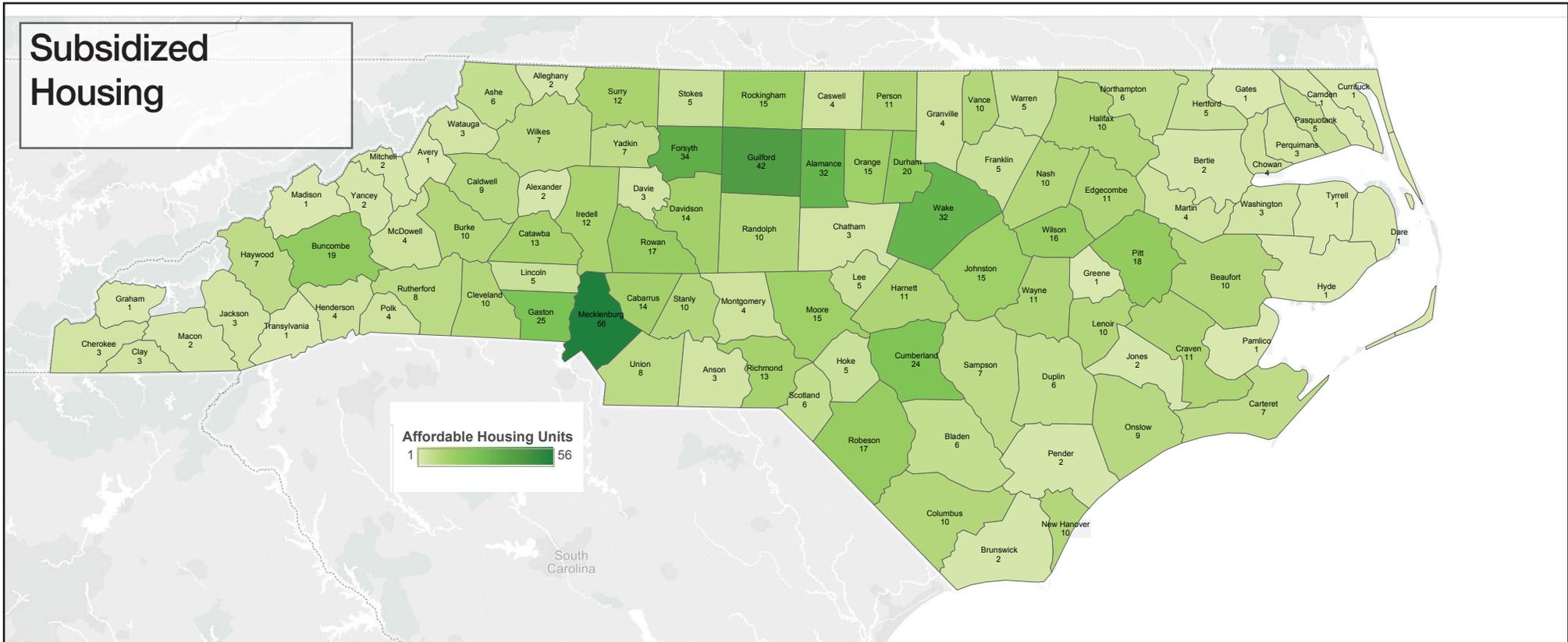
CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (HOUSING AND PROPERTY)



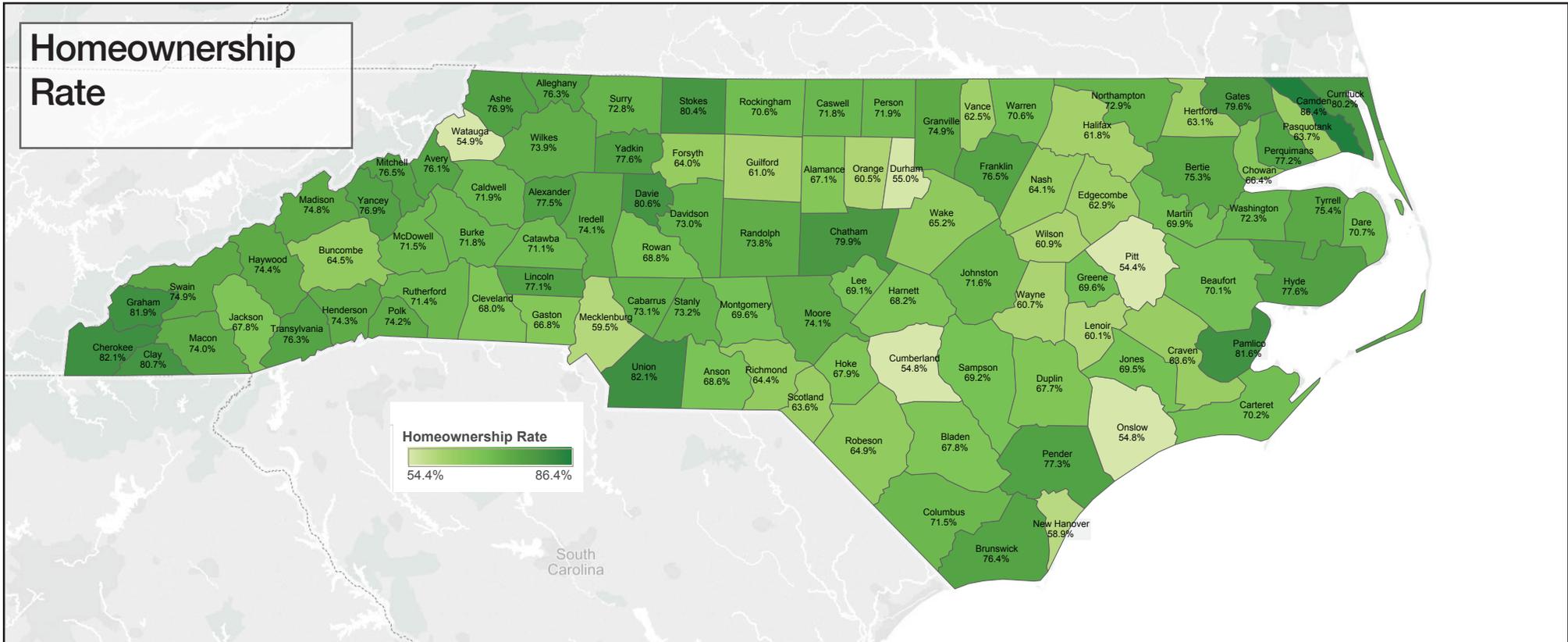
Explanation: Median respondent homeowner's estimate of how much their property would sell for if it were for sale

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (HOUSING AND PROPERTY)



CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (HOUSING AND PROPERTY)

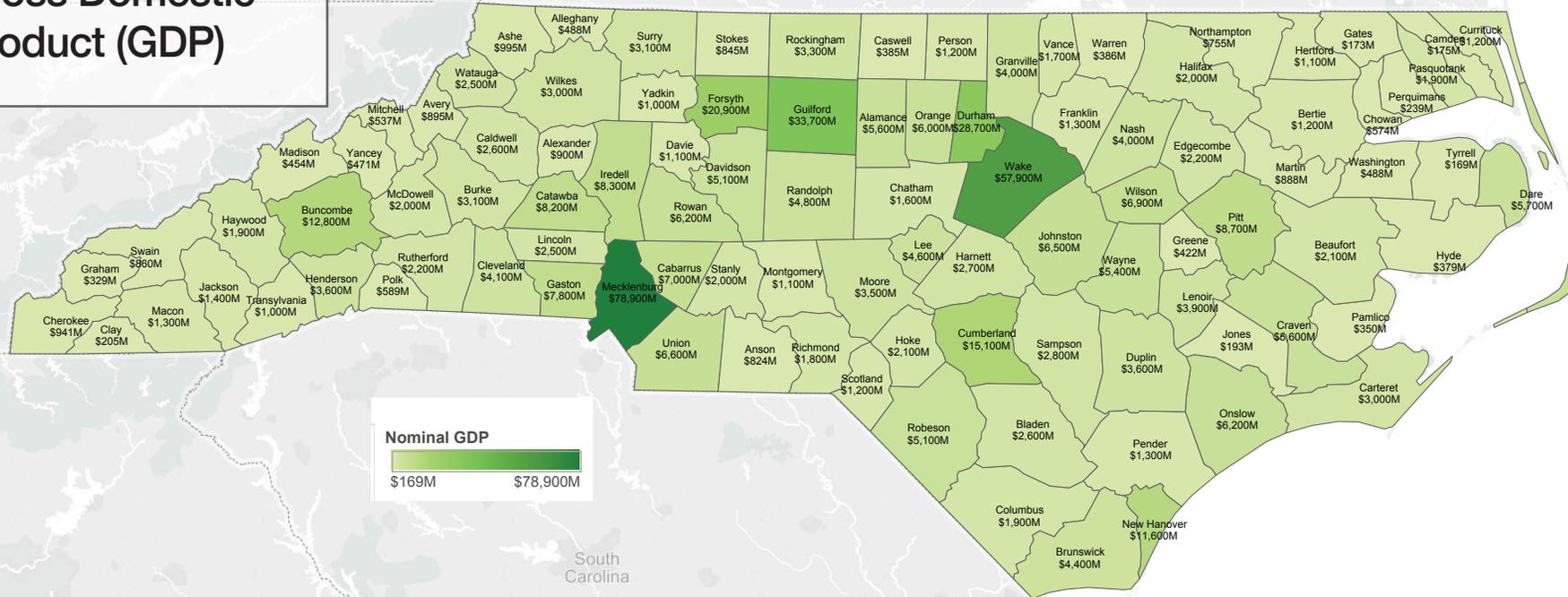


Explanation: Homeownership rate is calculated by dividing the number of owner-occupied housing units by the number of occupied housing units or households

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

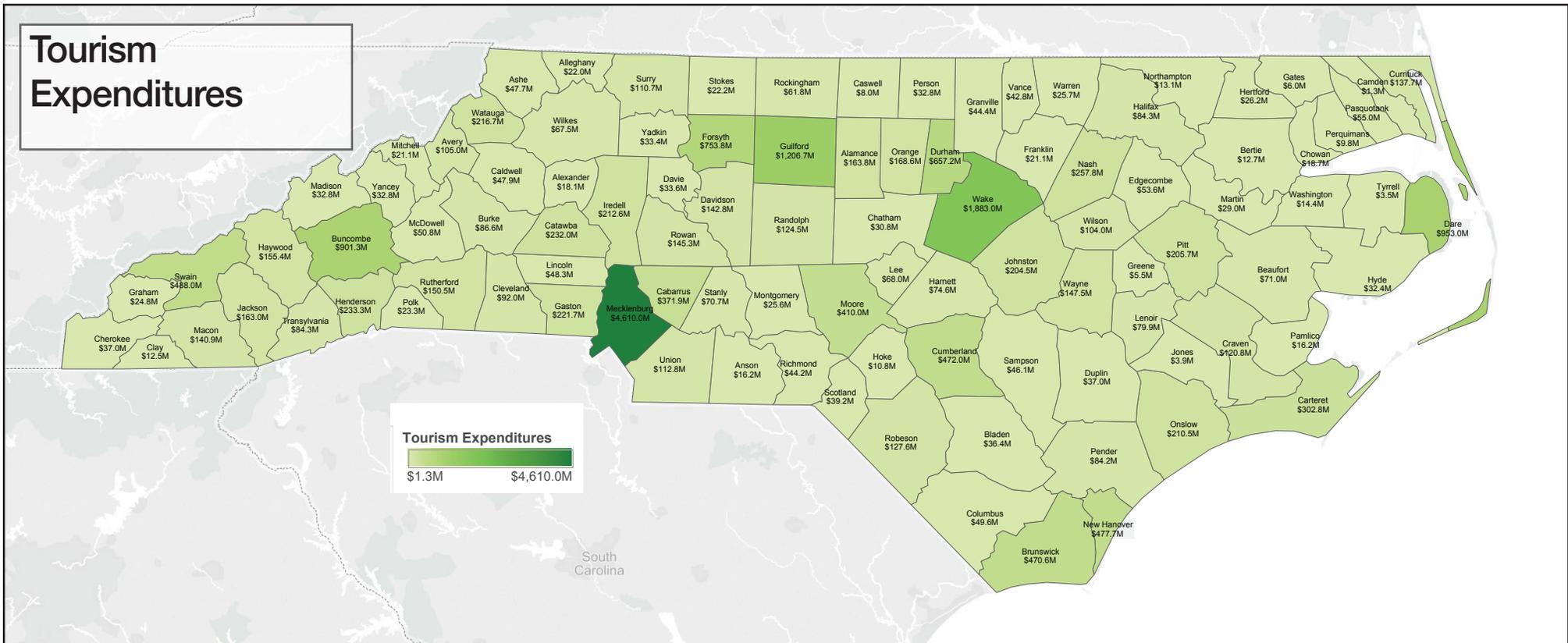


Explanation: Total value of the goods and services produced by the county's economy

Source: Moody's Analytics; National Association of Counties 2014

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE)

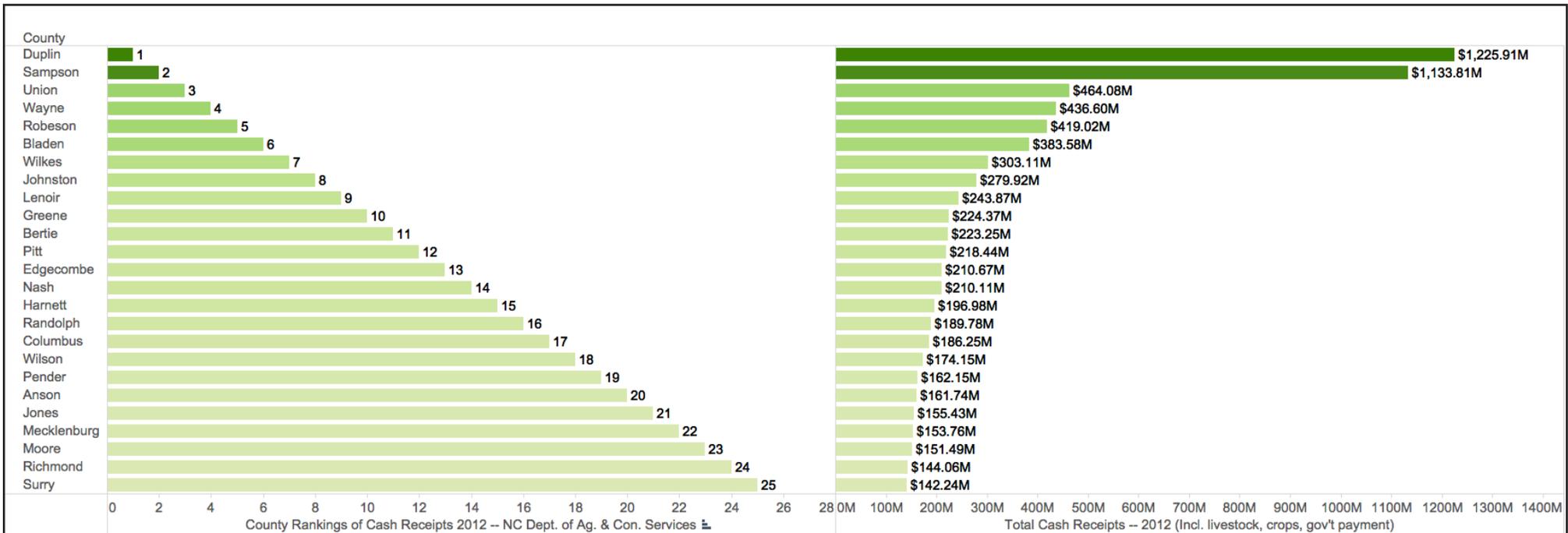
Tourism Expenditures



Explanation: Travel expenditures by county. Travel expenditures are defined as the goods and services the traveler purchases as part of his/her trip.

Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce, "The Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties 2013"

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE)



Agricultural Cash Receipts

Agricultural Receipts
173,023 1B

Explanation: Total cash receipts in the county (including receipts for livestock, dairy and poultry; crops; and government payments), with county rankings by cash receipt totals. Only the top 25 counties are included.

Source: North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services — Summary of Commodities by County 2012

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to read this year's "County Snapshots." To restate our interpretations of the data, there are clear regional disparities and trends within each of the clusters of data. We might presume that certain indicators and trends are interrelated, and they may influence one another. However, given the limitations of the data collection, we cannot definitively identify a causal link between any of the data presented in this book, but we can demonstrate clear demographic, social, and economic profiles of each county and region, and provide strong contexts for understanding the overall statuses of each county.

Indicators related to how counties are managed are conspicuously absent in these visualizations. The Association would like to produce future reports that would evaluate the efficacy and quality of certain county management indicators, which would serve as a complement to "County Snapshots." Our readership can expect future editions of this report, equipped with updated data and new indicators, depending upon what is garnering attention in federal, state and local government administrations, and depending upon the feedback we receive about this year's edition.

"County Snapshots" is available online at www.ncacc.org/countysnapshots.

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