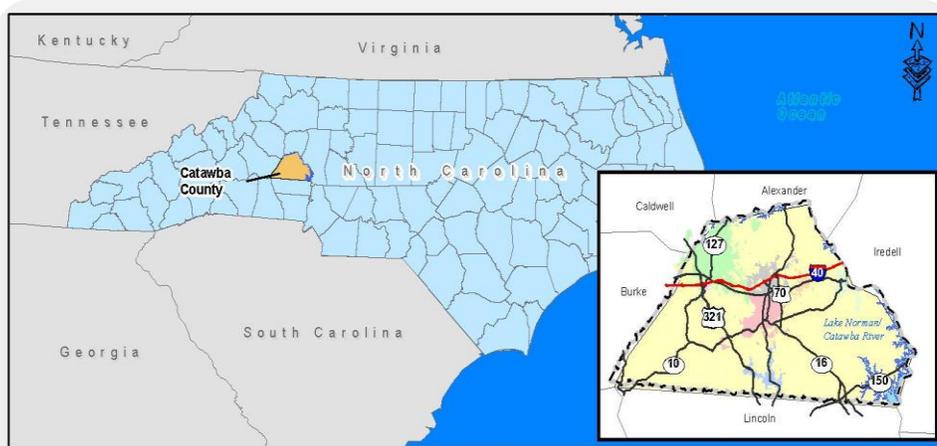


CATAWBA COUNTY PROFILE... "Keeping the Spirit Alive Since 1842"



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Located in a peaceful valley just east of North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, Catawba County is a land of scenic beauty, diverse cultures, and thriving industry. Three beautiful lakes are located within its 412 square miles, and the Catawba River winds along its western, northern, and eastern border. The County is named for the river and the Catawba Indians who foraged in the valley prior to European settlement in 1747.

History

Catawba County was officially established on December 12,

1842, when Lincoln County was divided by an act of the North Carolina General Assembly. Citizens living in what is now Catawba County found it too far to travel to Lincolnton, the Lincoln County seat, to conduct court business on a regular basis. Catawba County's seat was not selected until January 8, 1845. The North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation to the effect that "the present Town of Newton as selected and laid out shall be the site and location of the courthouse and jail of Catawba County." The final boundary line was moved to a point further north of Lincolnton than the line originally drawn, with the current boundary lying five and a half miles north of Lincolnton.

Governance

Catawba County is governed by five commissioners who are elected by a countywide vote and serve four-year staggered terms. A County Manager is appointed to serve as Chief Executive Officer. Partisan elections for the Board of County Commissioners are held in November in even-numbered years. The Board takes office the first Monday in December following the November election. At that time, the Board elects a Chair and Vice Chair from among its members. The Commissioners use the historic 1924 Courthouse located in downtown Newton (also home to the Catawba County Museum) for their bimonthly Board meetings. The major duties of the Board include: assessing the needs of the County and establishing programs and services to meet these needs, adopting an annual balanced budget, establishing the annual property tax rate, appointing members to County boards and commissions, regulating land use and zoning outside the jurisdiction of municipalities, enacting local ordinances, and adopting policies concerning County operations. The Board has the authority to call bond referendums, enter into contracts and establish new programs.



Population & Demographics

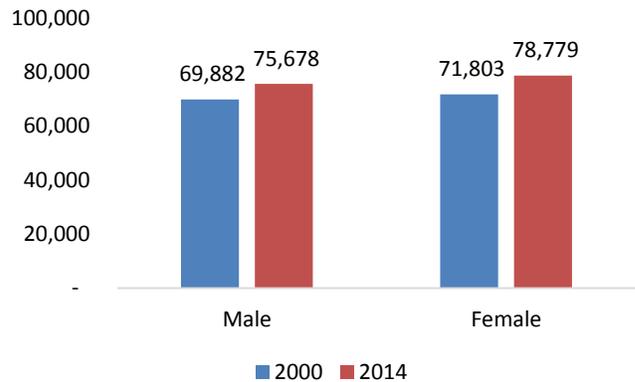
Catawba County's population is 154,457. The County has had little to no population growth over the last several years. However, the population continues to age. The median age of a Catawba County resident is 40.5 years, which is about 3 years older than the State and national median age. As the County ages, the ratio of men to women has remained the same over the last 13 years. Women make up 51 percent of the population whereas in 2000 they were 50.5 percent of the population. The County's population breakdown by ethnic background shows that the County is ¾ White, with Hispanic and Black as the second and third largest demographic groups respectively.

In 2014, the County's median household income was \$45,397, which was \$1,296 and \$8,085 less than the State and national median household income. However, just over half of the County's 25 years and older population (52 percent) has had at least some college, while approximately 83 percent of the population has a high school diploma or GED.

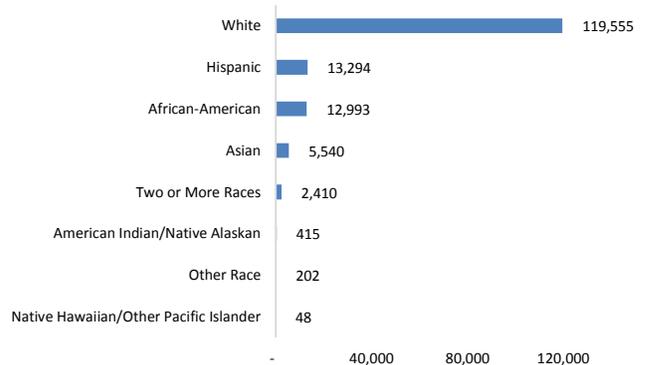
Economy

Catawba County, the central county of North Carolina's Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), has successfully diversified and balanced its traditional manufacturing base of furniture, textile, and telecommunications. Over the last 10 years the Trade, Transportation, & Utilities; Education & Health Services; and Professional and Business Services sectors have expanded, decreasing the County's reliance on manufacturing. In this post-recession period, comprehensive efforts are being directed at identifying and recruiting new sectors in manufacturing such as biomedical, pharmaceutical, technology and building products, and identifying and recruiting non-manufacturing sectors such as retirement and retail development. As a result of the County's economic development efforts (*see Budget Message*), local business investments, a recovering State and local economy, and overall general positive economic outlook by citizens, Catawba County's unemployment rate has steadily decreased over the last 18 months. Additionally, these efforts have shaped the composition of the County's largest principal employers and taxpayers.

County Population by Gender

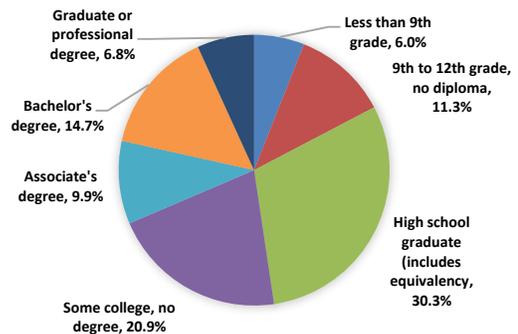


2014 County Population by Ethnic Group



Educational Attainment

25 years and older, 2014



CATAWBA COUNTY PROFILE

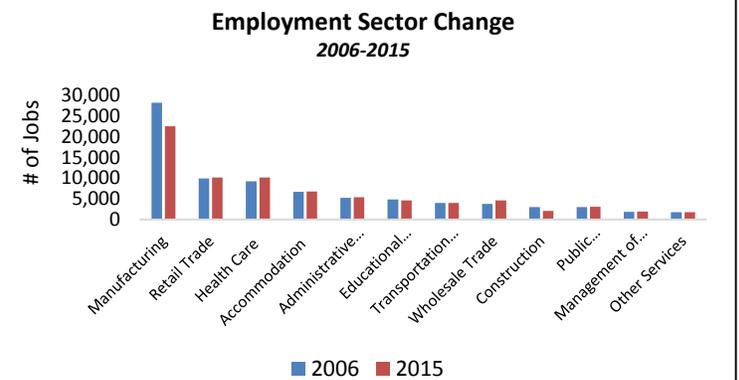
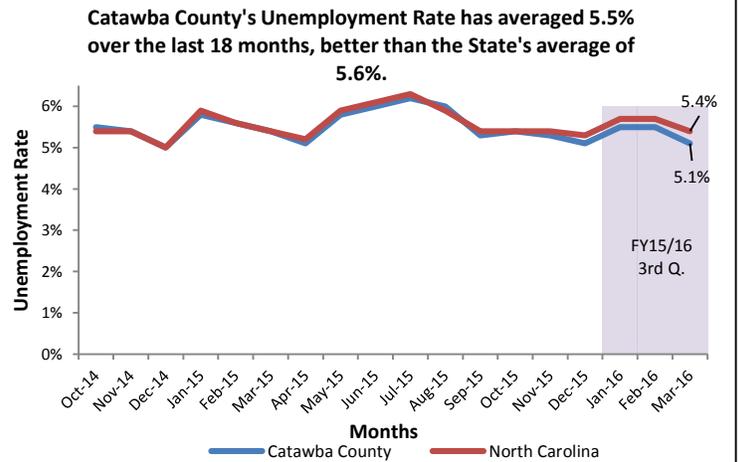


Catawba County Principal Employers

Employer	# of Employees	% of Total County Employment
Catawba County School Systems	1965	2.64%
Catawba Valley Medical Center	1759	2.37%
CommScope, Inc.	1468	1.98%
Frye Regional Medical Center	1400	1.88%
Catawba County Government	1120	1.65%
HSM Solutions (Hickory Springs)	1100	1.48%
Corning Cable Systems	1000	1.35%
Heritage Home Group LLC	861	1.16%
Pierre Foods	861	1.16%
Sherrill Furniture Company	775	1.04%

Catawba County Principal Taxpayers

Taxpayer	Type of Business	% of Total Taxable Assessed Value
Apple, Inc.	Computer Server	6.11%
Duke Energy Corporation	Electric Utility	3.61%
GKN Driveline Newton, LLC	Gears	0.71%
CommScope, Inc.	Cable Manufacturing	0.61%
Target Corporation	Warehouse/Retail	0.60%
Draka Comteq Americas, Inc.	Cable Manufacturing	0.49%
Frye Hospital/American Medical	Medical Care	0.43%
HSM Solutions (Hickory Springs)	Furniture Supplies	0.34%
Corning Cable Systems	Cable Manufacturing	0.32%
Valley Hills Mall, LLC	Retail	0.28%



The County's primary employers and taxpayers are a result of the changing economic environment. As an employer the County's three school systems along with the two medical centers showcase the strength of the local Education & Health Services employment sector. In regards to the County's effort to diversity the tax base, Apple Inc. and Target, two relative newcomers to the County, have added significant heft to the tax base while also aiding in the County's resiliency.



Quality of Life

The County has a total population of 154,457 and eight cities and towns: Hickory, Newton, Conover, Long View, Maiden, Claremont, Catawba, and Brookford. Due to the County's location in a valley of the Blue Ridge Mountains and nearby lakes, citizens enjoy a mild climate, with average highs of 48 degrees in January and 87 degrees in July. On average, the County receives about 47 inches of rainfall and seven inches of snowfall per year. The average elevation in Catawba County is 995 feet.

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Catawba County citizens enjoy a high quality of life, as Catawba County is the center of the region's retail shopping, entertainment, and cultural activities. A leading retail mall, furniture mart, convention center, movie theaters, retail shopping centers, and over 100 restaurants are major attractions for visitors from throughout the region. Catawba County citizens take pride in the region's unique history of local craftsmanship, including furniture manufacturing, pottery, and folk art. These arts have a strong presence in local cultural and entertainment centers, including two community theatres and a university theatre, a symphony, an art museum, an interactive science museum, a local history museum, and a variety of musical groups.

While benefitting from these major entertainment attractions, Catawba County citizens still enjoy a small-town feel with many community-oriented activities and events held throughout the year. Popular local events include the Hickory Hops and Oktoberfest festivals and the "Swinging Under the Stars" dance event in Hickory, Newton's Old Soldier's Reunion, Conover's Christmas in the Park celebration, Long View's May Days festival, the Claremont Daze Festival, and the Veterans Festival and Parade in Catawba, among others. The County also celebrates and supports a strong agriculture economy, with citizens enjoying various events supporting local producers during the "Eat, Drink, and Be Local" week as well as local restaurants and multiple farmers markets throughout the year.



Catawba County offers a wide range of sports and recreation for enthusiasts of every kind. The Hickory Motor Speedway hosts the NASCAR Dodge Weekly Series and is known as the "Birthplace of the NASCAR Stars." 2004 South Atlantic League Champion Hickory Crawdads (Class A Affiliate – Texas Rangers) offer minor league baseball at its best. In addition, Catawba County hosts the Greater Hickory Classic at Rock Barn (an annual PGA Champions Tour Event). Catawba County also has numerous parks – such as Riverbend, Bakers Mountain, and St. Stephens – that provide opportunities ranging from family picnics to hiking and fishing, and nine library branches that offer fun, educational programs throughout the year for all.

Catawba County has 45 public schools across three school systems with approximately 24,501 students. The County is also home to Lenoir-Rhyne College, a 125 year old liberal arts institution, and Catawba Valley Community College, which offers one and two year degree programs, a two year college transfer program, and continuing education classes. Additionally, the County is a major medical center, with two large hospitals, a substantial medical community, and many nursing home facilities.

There are over 200 congregations in Catawba County representing a variety of Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, and other beliefs. All major protestant religions are represented with the most adherents belonging to the Southern Baptist Convention, the United Methodist Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.