



NC DEPARTMENT  
of COMMERCE  
LABOR & ECONOMIC  
ANALYSIS

# Exploring NC's Economic Vitality: Introducing the County EVI Dashboard

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# What Labor & Economic Analysis Division Does



# The County EVI Gives Every NC County a Common Economic Yardstick

- "How is my county doing economically?" and "Are we getting better?" — common questions with no clean answer
- Single indicators like unemployment or income tell only part of the story
- A consistent benchmark makes it possible to track progress over time

*The County Economic Vitality Index: one composite score, all 100 NC counties, 15 years of history*



# Methodology



# The Index Tracks Four Core Indicators, Each Benchmarked to the U.S.

Indicator	What It Measures	Source
Annual Unemployment Rate	Joblessness	BLS LAUS
Avg. Weekly Wage (Private Sector)	Job quality	BLS QCEW
Median Household Income	Economic well-being	Census SAHPIE
% Adults 25+ with HS Diploma+	Economic mobility	Census ACS

- **Component Score** = (County Value ÷ U.S. Value) × 100 (*unemployment inverted*)
- **Composite Score** = (Unemployment + Wage + Income + Education) ÷ 4

***A score of 100 means equal to the national average — above 100 means outperforming, below means underperforming.***

# A Higher 2010 Score Predicted Faster Growth Over the Next 14 Years

- LEAD compared 2010 Index scores to actual growth outcomes through 2024
- On average, a county 10 points higher in 2010 experienced:
  - ~10 percentage points more job growth
  - ~14 percentage points more business establishment growth
  - ~10 percentage points more population growth
- Correlation, not causation — but it indicates the Index captures real underlying economic conditions

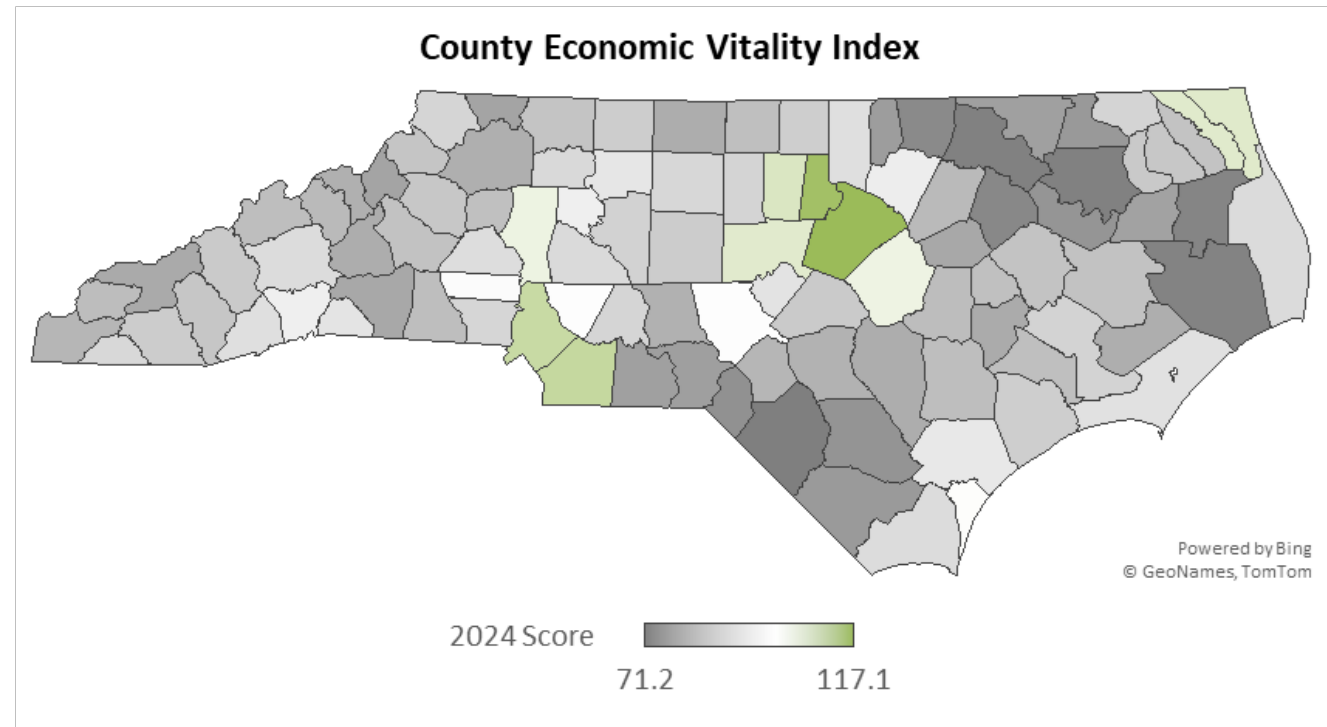


# Findings



# In 2024, 11 NC Counties Outperformed the U.S. — Up From 6 in 2010

- NC composite score: 98.4 in 2024 — highest since at least 2010
- Top performers concentrated around the Triangle, Charlotte, and Virginia Beach metros
- Wake (117.1), Durham (115.8), Union (109.9), Mecklenburg (109.3) lead the state

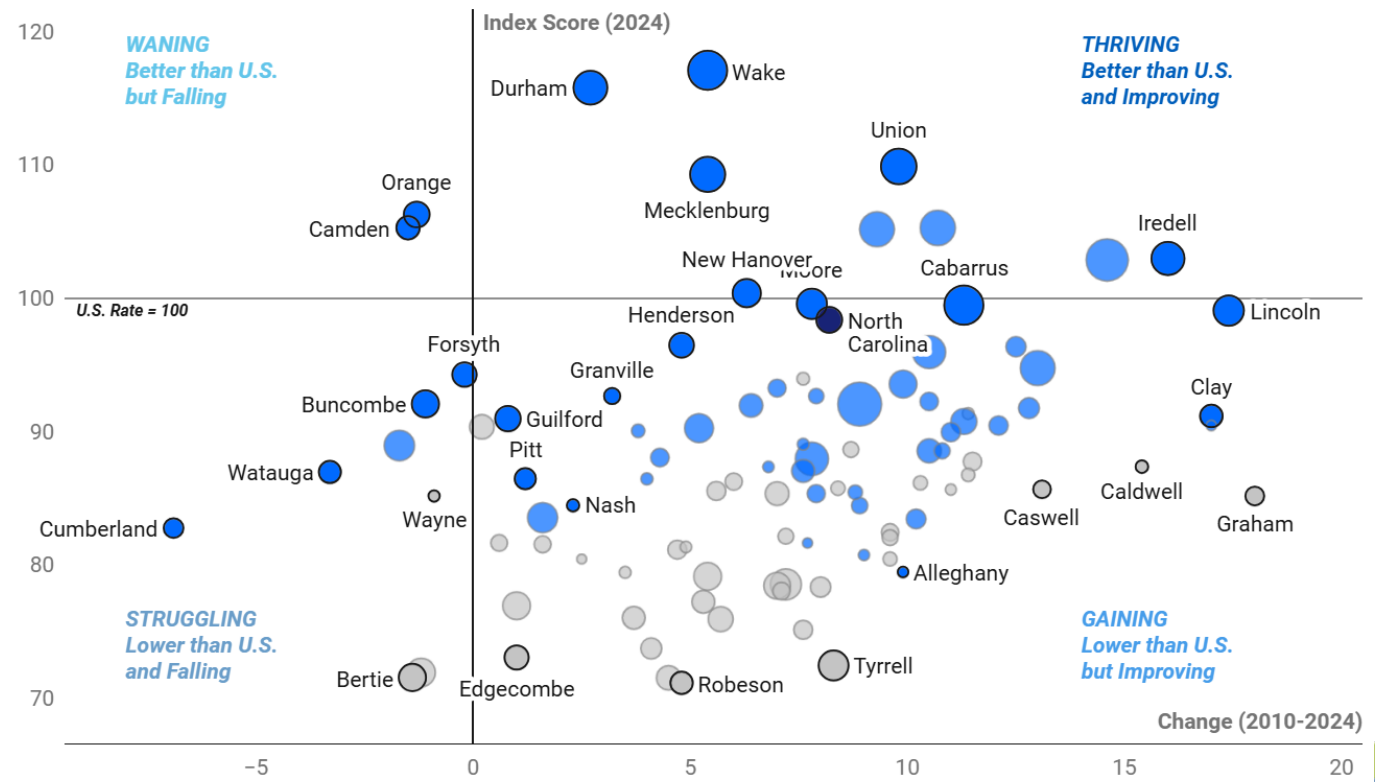


# 90 of 100 Counties Have Gained Ground on the U.S. Since 2010

- **Biggest drivers:** lower unemployment rates and higher high school attainment
- **Fast-improving areas:** suburbs and rural western NC
- **Seven counties closing in on U.S. average**
  - Moore, Cabarrus, Lincoln, Henderson, Davie, Franklin, and Pender

## County Economic Vitality Index

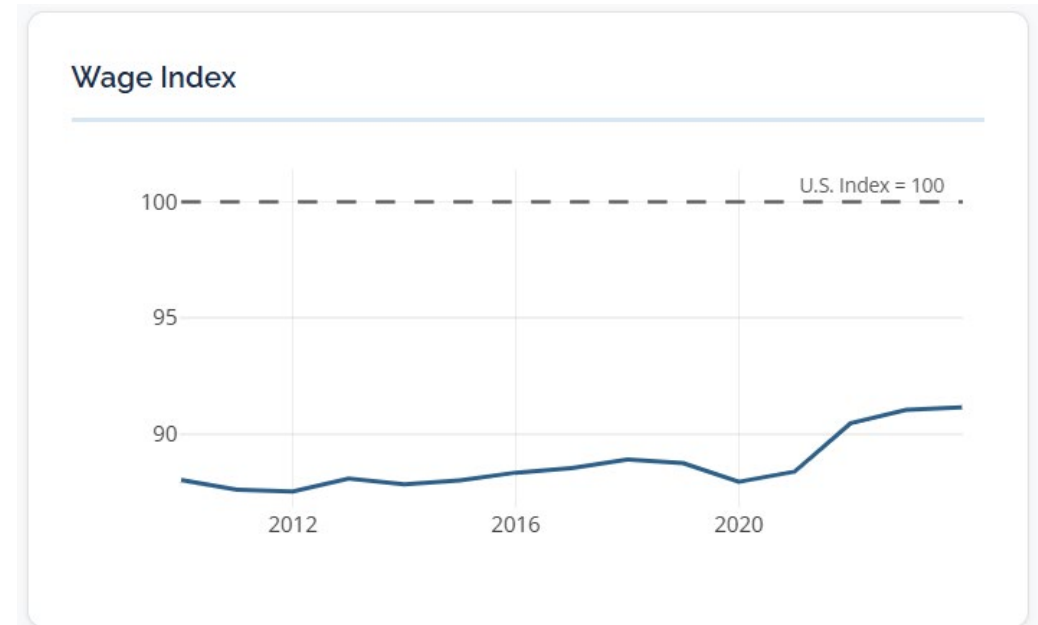
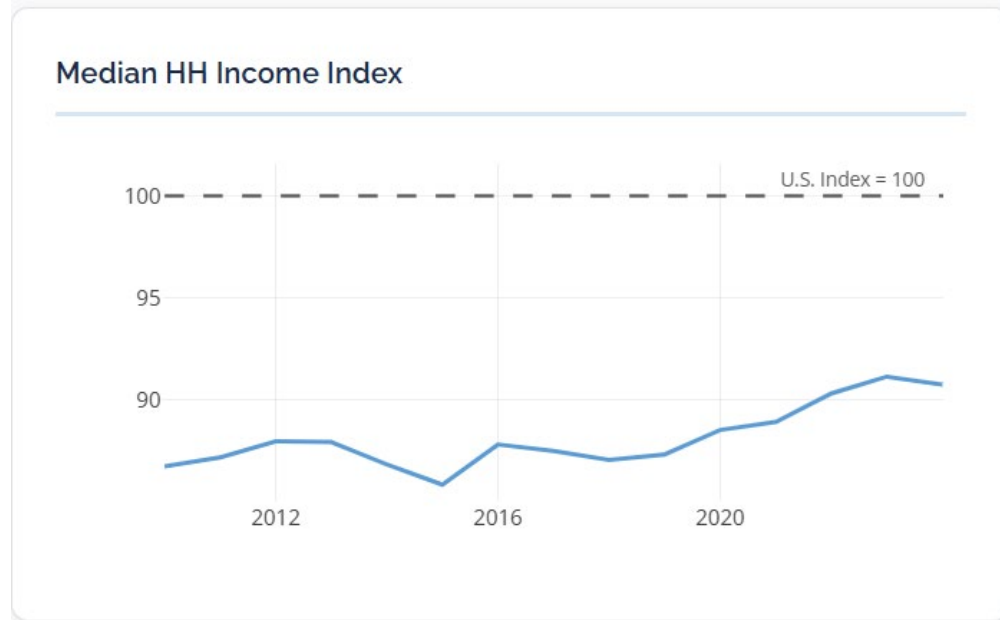
2010-2024 Data



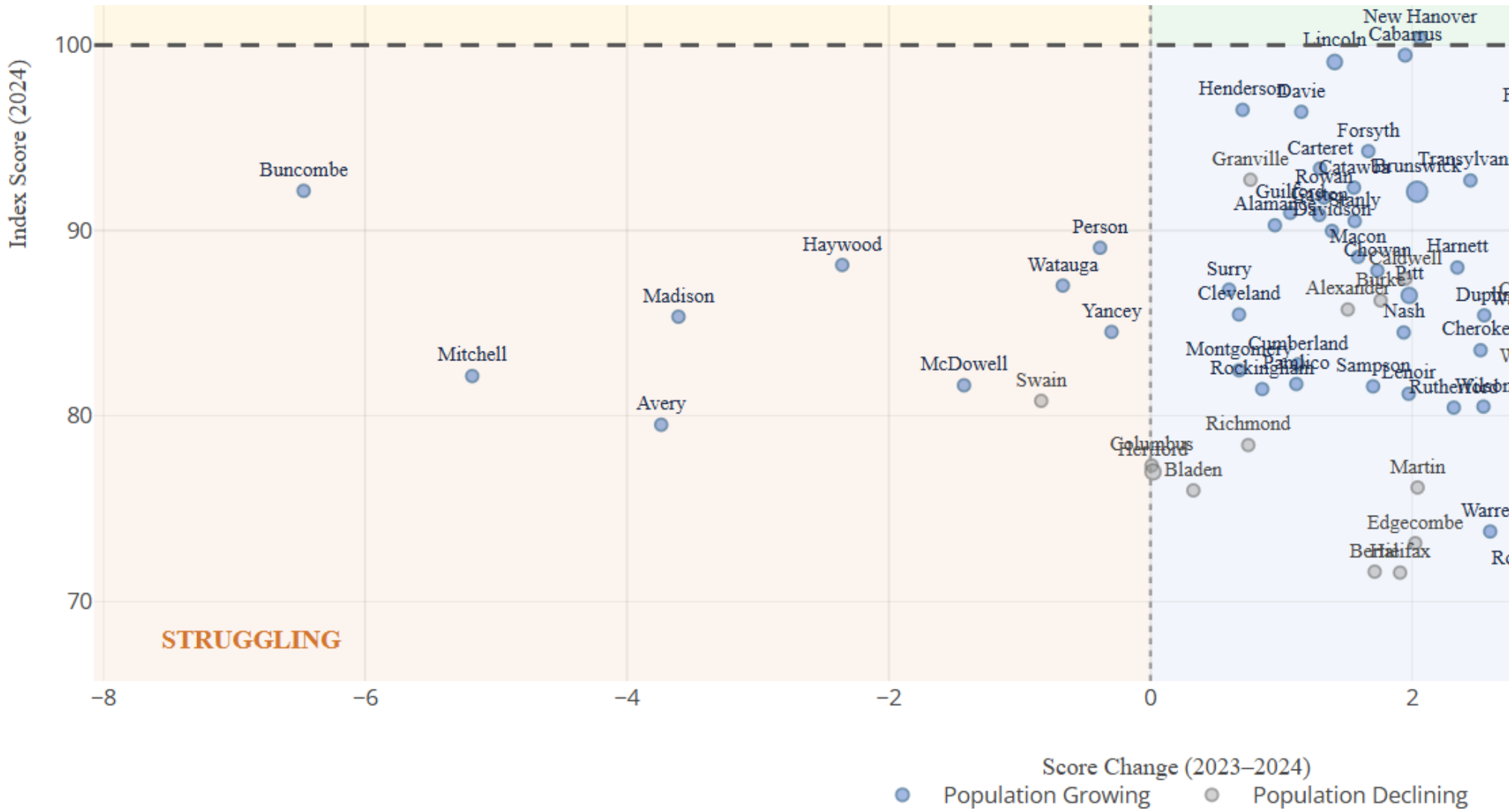
Bubble size = 2010-2024 population change. Blue=population growth, Gray=population decline.

# Wages and Income Still Drag Performance; Population Declines

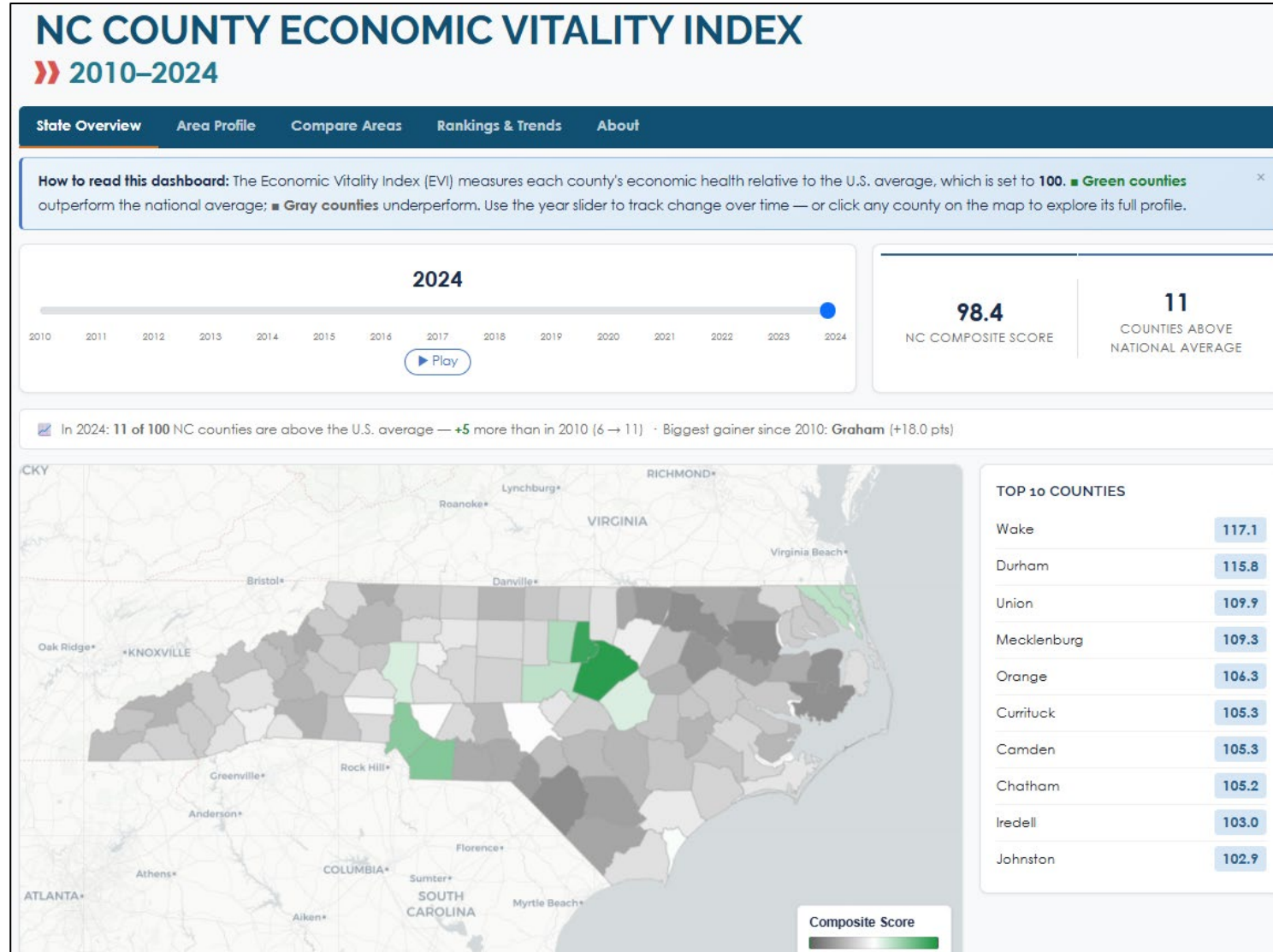
- Several mid-size metros barely keeping up or falling behind
  - Fayetteville, the Triad, Goldsboro, Rocky Mount, Greenville
- The 30 lowest-scoring counties (below 82.5) all declined in population since 2010



# Hurricane Helene's Economic Impact Shows up in the Data



# The Dashboard Puts 15 Years of County Data in Anyone's Hands



*Built for economic developers, local officials, workforce boards, researchers, and the general public*

# Live Demo

[analytics.nccommerce.com/Economic-Vitality-Index](https://analytics.nccommerce.com/Economic-Vitality-Index)



# Thank You

- **Dashboard**

- [analytics.nccommerce.com/economic-vitality-index](https://analytics.nccommerce.com/economic-vitality-index)

- **Related LEAD Feed Blog Posts**

- [Introducing the County Economic Vitality Index](#)
- [The State of NC's Counties: 10 Findings from the NEW County Economic Vitality Index](#)
- [Exploring NC's Economic Vitality: Introducing the County EVI Dashboard](#)

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