

NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE
LABOR & ECONOMIC
ANALYSIS

LMI TUESDAYS!

From Forms to Insights: How QCEW Data Works
and What it Tells Us

November 4, 2025

Haley Stritzel

Manager, Industry and Labor Force Analysis Team

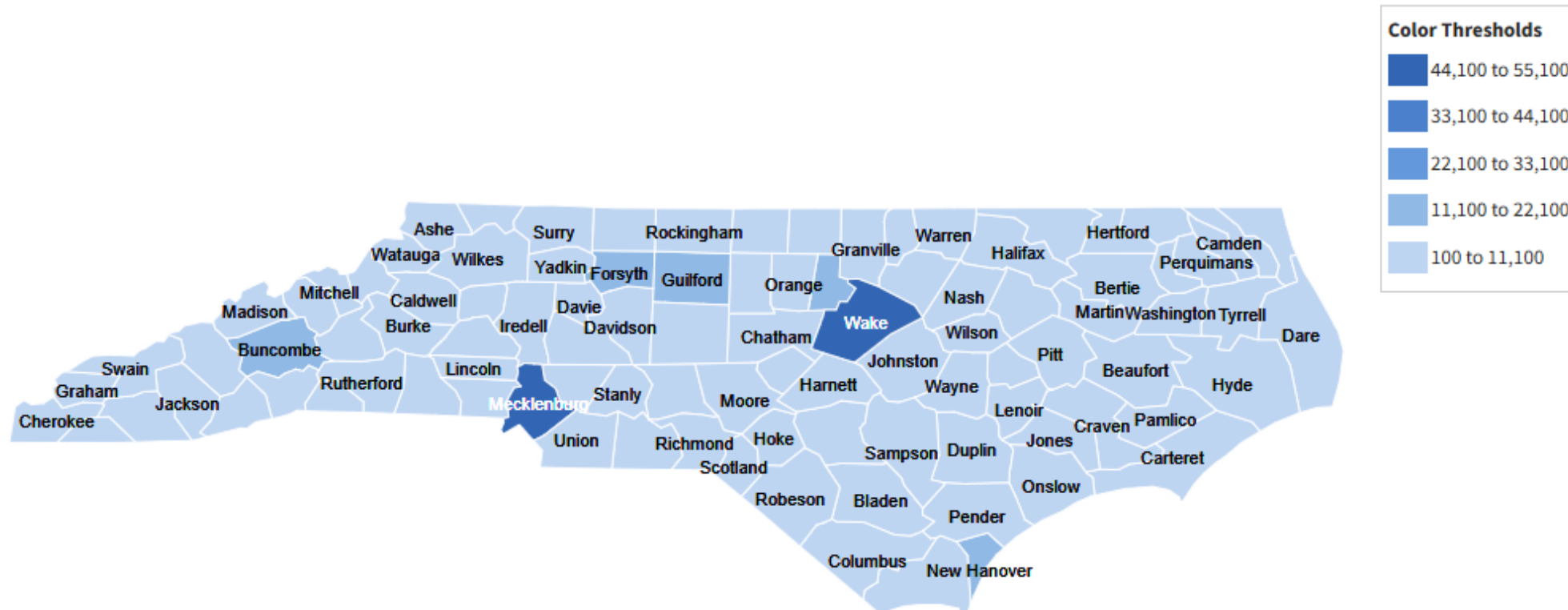
NC Department of Commerce

What is the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages?

- Federal-state cooperative program between the Bureau of Labor Statistics and NC Department of Commerce
- Each quarter, QCEW publishes a count of establishments, employment, and wages from **the entire population** of businesses, as opposed to a sample of businesses
- Establishments = physical locations of a business (one business can have multiple establishments)
- These counts are available:
 - By county
 - By ownership (private, federal government, state government, and local government)
 - By detailed industry level
 - By establishment size
- Three sources of data:
 - Unemployment insurance (UI) tax data from businesses
 - The Multiple Worksite Report (MWR)
 - The Annual Refiling Survey (ARS)

Example of QCEW Data in Action

Number of establishments, Total, All Industries Total Covered Q1 2025 (p)



Source: [QCEW State and County Map Application](#)

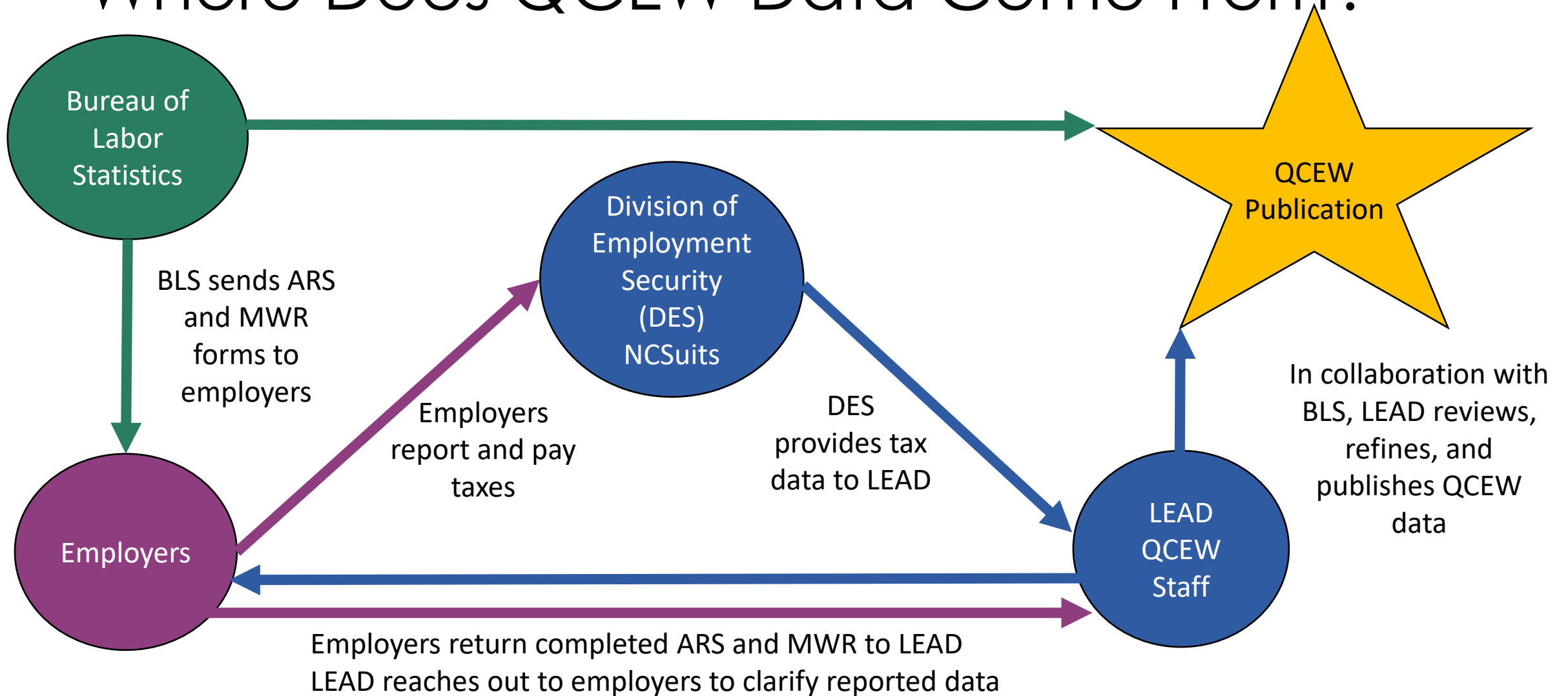
Who Is Included in QCEW?

- All workers who are covered by unemployment insurance (UI) tax, which is over 95% of jobs in the U.S.
- Workers are counted in the county that they **work**, not where they live
- If a worker has two jobs that are both covered by UI tax, then they will be counted twice in the QCEW
- Common types of workers that are excluded from QCEW:
 - Railroad workers
 - Self-employed workers/independent contractors
 - U.S. Armed Forces military personnel
 - Sales agents working on commission only
 - College student workers
 - Elected officials
 - Some agricultural and domestic workers

Who Uses QCEW?

- State UI agencies use QCEW to:
 - Set required wages for employees to pay taxes on and required earnings for individuals to qualify for UI benefits
 - Monitor health of UI program
- Other BLS programs use QCEW to:
 - Select businesses for surveys
 - Benchmark their estimates to QCEW levels
 - Make employment and industry projections
- Other federal agencies use QCEW to:
 - Use in calculations, such as the gross domestic product (GDP)
 - Build other data products, such as the Quarterly Workforce Indicators data
- Businesses, research organizations, journalists, educational institutions, and many more users use QCEW data for planning and research

Where Does QCEW Data Come From?



Unemployment Insurance Tax Data

- Each quarter, employers must complete the Quarterly Tax and Wage Report (Form NCUI101) and submit to the Division of Employment Security (DES)
- This report includes:
 - Monthly count of employees who worked during the quarter
 - Total wages of each employee who worked during the quarter
- This data is transmitted to LEAD quarterly
- In addition, LEAD receives the following information on businesses from DES:
 - Name
 - Addresses
 - Contact information
 - Business activity
 - Dates of business opening, closing, and re-opening

Unemployment Insurance Tax Data

As of November 2023, employers can use NCSuits to file and pay their taxes

Welcome USER, EMPLOYER | Last logged on at 9/12/2023 11:56:23 AM | Build Version: 0.0.9.9 | Application Date: 09/12/2023

+ Wage Submission Mainten... > Wage Submission * X ← Displaying page 1 of 1. →

Employer Information

Employer ID: 0995437683 Business Name: GENERAL EMPLOYERS Current UI Tax Rate: 5.00%
FEIN: [REDACTED] DBA Name: N/A Employment Type: General
Account Status: [Active](#) Reporting Type: Contributory Liability Date: 01/01/2022

Employment Information

Submission Summary

Report Year-Quarter: 2022-2 Total UI Wages: \$31,200.00 Out of State Taxable Wages: \$1,000.00
Submission Type: Original Wage Report Count of UI Wages: 4 Count of Out Of State Wages: 1

Enter the number of employees in this pay group who worked or received pay for any part of the pay period that includes the 12th of the month.

Total Employed Month # 1: * Total Employed Month # 2: * Total Employed Month # 3: *

[Save Wages](#) [Show SSN](#)

SSN	Last Name	First Name	MI	Gross Wages	Out Of State Taxable Wages	Employee/Officer	Location Summary	SOC Code
xxx-xx-5555	MARKS	SIMON		\$7,000.00	\$0.00	▼	15585 - PRIMARY ▼	
xxx-xx-7878	O'RYAN	LISA		\$8,500.00	\$1,000.00 (SC)	▼	15585 - PRIMARY ▼	
xxx-xx-9090	HERNANDEZ	MARY		\$8,700.00	\$0.00	▼	15585 - PRIMARY ▼	
xxx-xx-6767	PRITCHETT	ROBERT		\$7,000.00	\$0.00	▼	15585 - PRIMARY ▼	

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

LEAD Processing of UI Tax Data

- LEAD QCEW staff reviews, annotates, and corrects erroneous data
- This often involves calling employers to verify reported data
- The main goal is to determine if unusual data is due to an error in reporting or true economic change
- If true economic change, what is the cause?
- Example scenarios:
 - Large increase in wages – did the employer pay out bonuses or is it a typo?
 - Employment dropped to 0 in month 3 – did the business close or did the employer forget to fill in this box?
 - Employment sharply declined – did the business experience lay-offs or is there a predictable seasonal decline?

Supplemental Forms for QCEW

- LEAD uses two other data sources to refine QCEW data
 - The Multiple Worksite Report (MWR)
 - The Annual Refiling Survey (ARS)
- These forms give information that is not available or not available in a timely manner from the UI tax data
- Solicitations and reminders to complete these forms typically come from BLS
- Employers complete these forms on the BLS website or mail/email directly to LEAD

Multiple Worksite Report (MWR)

- Businesses with multiple establishments (e.g., Starbucks) complete this form quarterly to provide additional detail that is not available from the UI tax data
- For each establishment, businesses provide:
 - The physical address
 - A name or description (e.g., Starbucks RDU Terminal 2)
 - The number of employees who worked each month of the quarter
 - The total wages of employees during the quarter

Bureau of Labor Statistics

Please complete and fax or mail this form to your State Workforce Agency. Agency information is located at:
<https://www.bls.gov/respondents/mwr/state-contacts.htm>

Multiple Worksite Report—BLS 3020

Form Approved O.M.B. No. 1220-0134
Expiration Date: 11/30/2025
In Cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor



This report is authorized by law, 29 U.S.C. 2. Your cooperation is needed to make the results of this survey complete, accurate, and timely.

Unemployment Insurance Account Number: _____ Quarter: _____ Year: _____

Business Mailing Address

Business Name: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Worksites

Worksites	Number of Employees			Quarterly Wages (Subject to UI laws) Round to the nearest dollar.
	During the Pay-period, which includes the 12th of the month			
	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	
Business Name:				
Street Address:				
City:				
State:				
ZIP:				
Business Name:				
Street Address:				
City:				
State:				
ZIP:				
Business Name:				
Street Address:				
City:				
State:				
ZIP:				
Business Name:				
Street Address:				
City:				
State:				
ZIP:				
Business Name:				
Street Address:				
City:				
State:				
ZIP:				
Business Name:				
Street Address:				
City:				
State:				
ZIP:				
Note: The totals MUST agree (except for rounding)				
Total:				

Note: The totals MUST agree (except for rounding) with your Quarterly Contributions Report.

Contact Person Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Multiple Worksite Report (MWR)

- Businesses with multiple establishments typically report their taxes under one address
- However, to have the most accurate counts of employment and wages by county and industry, QCEW needs to know how many people work at each establishment
- As a simplified, fictional example:
 - Starbucks reports wages of their 1,000 employees to DES
 - Because their corporate headquarters is in Charlotte, the UI tax data would show that 1,000 employees work in Charlotte
 - However, in reality, employees work in multiple establishments across the state

UI Tax Data from DES		Data from MWR	
County	Employees	County	Employees
Mecklenburg	1,000	Mecklenburg	350
Wake	0	Wake	250
Orange	0	Orange	50
Durham	0	Durham	100
Other counties	0	Other counties	250
Total	1,000	Total	1,000

Annual Refiling Survey

- Businesses complete this form (formally called the Industry Verification Survey) once every three years to keep their address and industry information up-to-date
- This form asks businesses to verify and update:
 - Their physical and mailing address
 - The county where the business is physically located
 - Their primary business activity
 - If the business has any additional establishments

Bureau of Labor Statistics
Annual Refiling Survey

Industry Verification Form, BLS 3023-NVS
Form Approved, O.M.B. No. 1220-0032
Expiration Date: 06/30/2027
In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor

Please complete and fax or mail this form to your
State Workforce Agency. Agency information is located
at: <https://www.bls.gov/respondents/ars/contacts.htm>

Unemployment Insurance Account Number: _____

This report is authorized by law, 29 U.S.C. 2. Your cooperation is needed to make the results of this survey complete, accurate, and timely. Purpose, use and help information are located on the back of this form.

We appreciate your response within **14 days**. Thank you.

1 BUSINESS MAILING ADDRESS Please print.

Business Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ ST: _____ ZIP: _____

2 PHYSICAL LOCATION ADDRESS of your business location Please print.

Street Address: _____

City: _____ ST: _____ ZIP: _____

☐ More than one physical location. Please attach a sheet listing each site and include: (1) business name (2) physical location address (3) number of employees (4) county & (5) main business activity. Please don't count client sites or off-site projects lasting less than a year.

☐ Business has employees working in the state but no physical location in the state. If so, please continue to Item 4.

3 COUNTY: _____

Please provide the County where your business is physically located in the state.

4 MAIN BUSINESS ACTIVITY

We need detailed information to assign the correct North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code to this business. In the space provided below, describe your business activities, goods, products, or services in this State, as though you were telling a prospective employee what you do. Please describe the activities and provide the approximate percentage of sales or revenues resulting from each activity. For more information see instructions and examples for Item 4 on the back of this page. Percentages should total 100%. If you are a third-party agent for the business named in Item 1, such as a payroll service or accountant, please review Item 4 with your client.

	Must equal 100%
_____	_____ %
_____	_____ %
_____	_____ %
_____	_____ %
_____	_____ %

Please list the main activities and their percentages of sales/revenue here:

5 CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____

Annual Refiling Survey (ARS)

- The ARS helps LEAD staff get updated information in the following scenarios:
 - The physical address from DES was incorrect
 - The industry code from DES was incorrect
 - A business moved to a different address
 - A business transitioned to a different industry
 - A business has added establishments and might now be eligible for the Multiple Worksite Report

Finding the North Carolina QCEW data

<https://d4.nccommerce.com/>

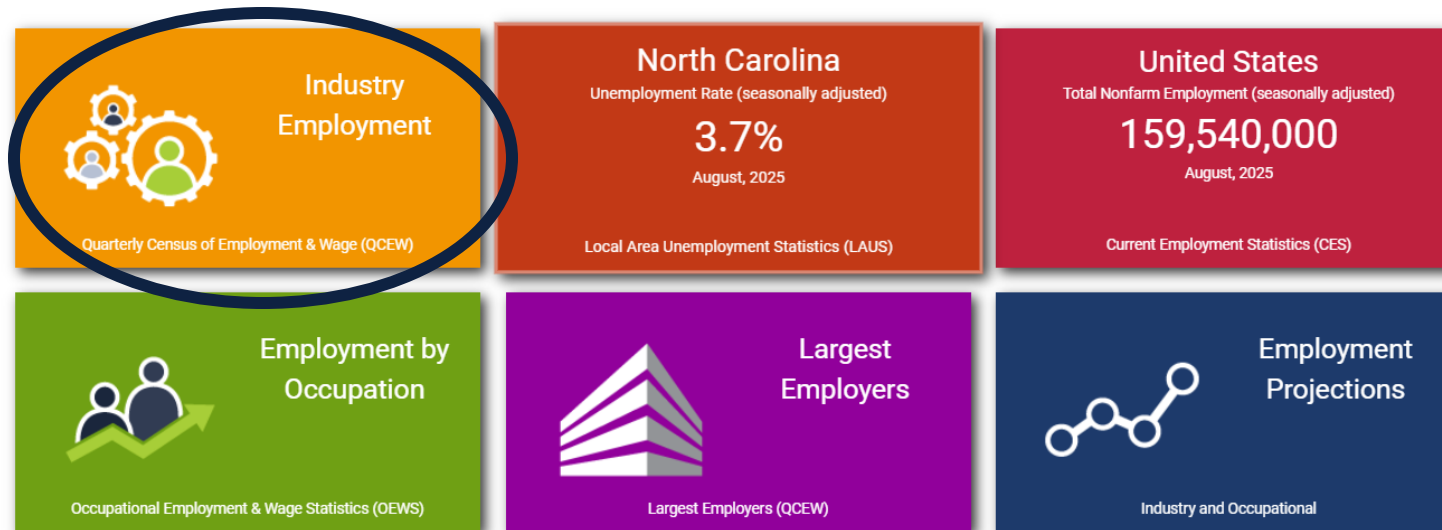
Welcome to D4

Demand Driven Data Delivery

North Carolina's Official Labor Market Data Source

The most current and historical labor market information available.

View, share, and download statewide, local, and regional data.



Select Geography:

[Reset All Geographies](#)[Select All Geographies](#)☒ North Carolina☐ County☐ Workforce Development Area (WDB)☐ Metropolitan Statistical Area (2023 Def)☐ Prosperity Zones

Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) ?

● Data by Industry ○ Industry by Size Groups

NAICS Level:

Total (000000)
Supersector or Domain
Sector (2 digit)
Subsector (3 digit)
Industry Group (4 digit)
Industry (5 digit)
Industry (6 digit)

Industry:

721191 - Bed-and-Breakfast Inns
721199 - All Other Traveler Accommodation
721211 - RV (Recreational Vehicle) Parks and Campgrounds
721214 - Recreational and Vacation Camps (except Campgrounds)
721310 - Rooming and Boarding Houses, Dormitories, and Workers' Camps
722110 - Full-Service Restaurants
722211 - Limited-Service Restaurants
722310 - Mobile Food Services

Ownership:

Aggregate of all types
Private
Local Government
State Government
Federal Government

Year:

2025
2024
2023
2022
2021
2020

Period:

Annual
Quarter 1
Quarter 2
Quarter 3
Quarter 4

Data:

Establishments
Average Employment
Month 1 Employment
Month 2 Employment
Month 3 Employment
Total Wages
Average Weekly Wage



Year	Quarter	Area Name	Ownership	NAICS Code	Industry	Establishments	Average Employment	Month 1 Employment	Month 2 Employment	Month 3 Employment	Total Wages	Average Weekly Wage
2025	01	North Carolina	Aggregate of all types	722310	Food Service Contractors	1,031	18,950	18,649	18,910	19,290	\$185,813,438.00	\$754.00
2025	01	North Carolina	Aggregate of all types	722320	Caterers	379	3,418	3,187	3,398	3,670	\$23,524,143.00	\$529.00
2025	01	North Carolina	Aggregate of all types	722330	Mobile Food Services	372	1,019	949	1,002	1,105	\$5,278,336.00	\$399.00
2025	01	North Carolina	Aggregate of all types	722410	Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)	1,064	9,088	8,989	9,059	9,216	\$55,848,442.00	\$473.00
2025	01	North Carolina	Aggregate of all types	722511	Full-Service Restaurants	9,144	169,977	168,445	170,220	171,267	\$1,094,629,809.00	\$495.00
2025	01	North Carolina	Aggregate of all types	722513	Limited-Service Restaurants	8,841	167,401	166,885	166,980	168,339	\$853,336,753.00	\$392.00
2025	01	North Carolina	Aggregate of all types	722514	Cafeterias, Grill Buffets, and Buffets	179	2,862	2,833	2,836	2,918	\$18,548,891.00	\$498.00
2025	01	North Carolina	Aggregate of all types	722515	Snack and Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars	2,472	26,084	25,739	25,810	26,704	\$141,965,134.00	\$419.00

Additional information regarding the QCEW program including data for the Nation and other states can be accessed on the Bureau of Labor Statistics website at <https://www.bls.gov/qcew/>[QCEW industry hierarchy](#)

Additional resources

- [Information for Annual Refiling Survey Respondents](#)
- [Information for Multiple Worksite Report Respondents](#)
- [BLS - QCEW Handbook of Methods](#)
- [Overview of BLS programs – D4](#)

Questions?

Feel free to reach out!

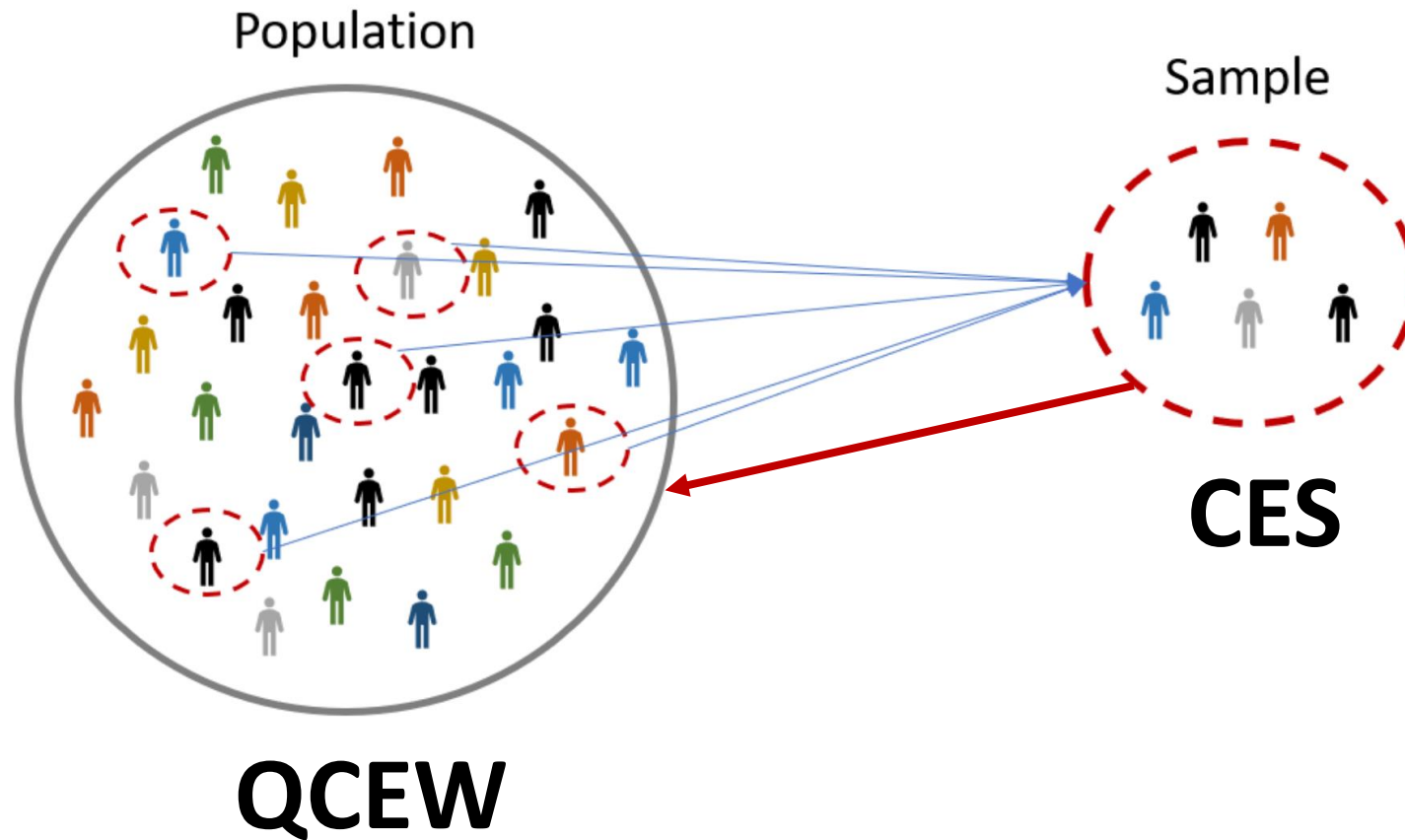
Haley Stritzel, Industry and Labor Force Analysis Manager

haley.stritzel@commerce.nc.gov

Appendix: QCEW vs. Current Employment Statistics (CES)

QCEW	CES
Based on administrative tax data and supplemental forms	Based on survey data
Published numbers are population counts, not survey estimates	Published numbers are estimates based on surveys and statistical modeling (until benchmarking)
Excludes employment that is not covered by UI	Includes employment that is not covered by UI
Available approximately five months after the reference quarter	Available 2-3 weeks after the reference month
Data is available at the county level and more detailed industry level	Data is available at the MSA (multi-county) level; data is not available for all industries
Source of benchmark data for other programs	Benchmarked to QCEW levels during annual processing

Appendix: QCEW versus CES



- The blue arrows represent that the CES sample is drawn from the QCEW population
- CES data provide information about the economy more quickly, but with less accuracy than if we could get information from the entire population every month
- The red arrow represents that the CES estimates are benchmarked to QCEW when this data becomes available
- QCEW data provide more comprehensive information, but they take longer to collect and process