

#13 of 10: 12-month change in the metropolitan unemployment rate (August 2026)

# Wilmington trails 12 NC metros in job market recovery

Source: ALEX Intelligence · Published October 25, 2026

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## THE DATA

# -0.5%

12-month change in the metropolitan unemployment rate (August 2026)

Wilmington's job market improved, but at a slower pace than most North Carolina metros.

This -0.5% change reflects a modest decline in unemployment over the past year, placing Wilmington 13th among 15 North Carolina metros. While the region saw job growth, it lagged behind faster-improving areas like Asheville and Rocky Mount, which posted stronger declines of -1.1% and -0.8%, respectively. The gap suggests structural or sectoral constraints in labor market absorption.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics and Current Employment Statistics, August 2026 (seasonally unadjusted, metropolitan) • ALEX Intelligence computation

<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-10-25-wilmington-lab-bls-unemp-rate-chg-12m-msa>



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# 01

## Resilience through stagnation

Wilmington's relatively flat unemployment trend isn't weakness—it's a sign of market maturity. Unlike rapidly growing metros where labor supply can't keep pace with demand, Wilmington's stability suggests a balanced labor market where job creation matches workforce expansion. This equilibrium reduces the risk of overheating and wage spirals, making the market more sustainable in the long term. The city is not overheating; it's holding steady.

# 02

## The hidden cost of stability

Stability in the job market can mask underlying challenges. With unemployment declining at only -0.5%, Wilmington may be underperforming in attracting new talent or retaining skilled workers. The slow pace of labor market improvement could signal weaker demand for certain sectors, such as hospitality or construction, or reflect limited workforce mobility. In a tight housing market, this could delay broader economic acceleration, even as prices rise.



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