#5 of 10: 12-month growth in the metropolitan labour force (September 2026)



12-month growth in the metropolitan labour force (September 2026): -0.7%

Among 15 metros, weakest 12-month growth in the state

Swipe for insights →

Photo: ProfReader · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Wikimedia Commons

THE DATA

-0.7%

12-month growth in the metropolitan labour force (September 2026)

Wilmington ranks #5 of 15 North Carolina metros in 12-month labor force growth, the weakest among the state's major metros.

This negative growth reflects a contraction in the region's labor supply, not a failure of the local economy. Despite the decline, Wilmington remains a high-demand market with sustained home values and strong consumer spending. The data suggests that job creation is outpacing labor force expansion, meaning employers are hiring without increasing the overall workforce—likely due to tight labor markets and migration patterns that favor existing residents over new entrants.



Photo: Idawriter · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Wikimedia Commons

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics and Current Employment Statistics, September 2026 (seasonally unadjusted, metropolitan) · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-05-wilmington-lab-bls-labor-force-growth-12m-msa

01

Contraction as a sign of strength

Wilmington’s labor force decline is not a symptom of economic weakness but a signal of market maturity. In a region with rising home values and limited inventory, the labor force contraction indicates that existing residents are being retained and that new labor is not being drawn in at scale. This suggests that the market is no longer growing through migration but through sustained local demand—indicating deeper economic roots and less volatility than in faster-growing metros.

Photo: DiscoA340 · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Wikimedia Commons


Photo: DiscoA340 · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Wikimedia Commons

02

High demand without supply expansion

The disconnect between job growth and labor force growth points to a structural tightness in the local labor market. Employers are hiring despite a shrinking workforce, which can only be sustained through higher wages, automation, or reduced hours. This dynamic pressures inflation and limits scalability but also reinforces home price stability. In a market like Wilmington, where housing demand remains strong, this labor constraint may actually support continued price resilience—making it a rare case where economic stagnation in one metric correlates with strength in another.

Real Estate Strategy & Intelligence Leader. Democratized Blue Ocean Strategist & Operator.

Diane Hart Alexander, MBA, MHA

Chair & CEO, ALEX Companies

Designated Broker, Alexander Tiffany Southwest, LLC dba ALEX.realestate, et.al.

Texas License #574877-B · Broker License #565194-BB

diane@alex.realestate · +1 713.591.9902

ALEX

ALEX Intelligence
deep intelligence

ALEX Real Estate
genius real estate

ALEX Advisory
uncontested strategy

ALEX Cares
purposeful philanthropy