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

Haywood County Leads in Labor Force Decline

Buncombe, Henderson, and Madison counties show negative growth in September 2026

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THE DATA

-0.2%

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

Haywood County recorded the smallest decline in labor force growth among the Asheville region’s counties.

This modest contraction—-0.2%—is the least negative among Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties, indicating relative stability in Haywood’s workforce despite broader regional declines. The data reflects a deeper trend: while population and housing demand remain strong, labor force participation is not keeping pace, especially in non-urban areas.



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Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, September 2026 (county, seasonally unadjusted) · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-18-asheville-lab-bls-labor-force-growth-12m-county

01

Stability in decline signals resilience

Haywood County’s -0.2% labor force growth, the highest among the region’s five counties, suggests it is better insulated from labor market volatility than its peers. This may reflect stronger local employment in healthcare, education, and small-scale manufacturing—sectors less affected by national economic shifts. The relative stability supports the idea that even in contraction, Haywood is outperforming its neighbors, making it a strategic anchor for regional workforce planning.

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02

The core is growing, periphery is shrinking

While Haywood shows relative stability, the deeper declines in Buncombe (-1.6%) and Henderson (-1.1%) signal a growing divergence between the core and periphery. Buncombe's labor force contraction—despite its high home sales volume—suggests that high housing costs are deterring labor force entry, especially among younger and lower-income workers. This tension between demand and supply may accelerate the shift toward remote work and hybrid employment models, favoring locations with lower cost of living and better access to amenities.

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