

**COLLABORATE**  
**2031** COUNTYWIDE  
STRATEGY



# Benchmark Analysis



Data analysis & research report for the  
Collaborate 2031 Community Strategic Plan  
June 2026

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# About the Benchmark Analysis

This Benchmark Analysis is the first report in our process to create a communitywide strategic plan in Collaborate 2031.

This analysis examines Horry County (the Myrtle Beach Metropolitan Statistical Area) across 30+ various economic, demographic, and community metrics. For each metric, Horry County is compared against five benchmark MSAs, the State of South Carolina, the State of North Carolina, and U.S. These data provide a valuable perspective on Myrtle Beach's competitive position, ultimately helping identify potential focus topics for the strategy.

This report aims to answer the questions, "How competitive is Horry County currently?" and "What are Myrtle Beach's differentiating strengths and challenges?" The data in this report can provide a foundation for tracking progress as new economic development initiatives are undertaken. It can also point to priorities that could be included in the Strategic Plan.

Horry County is benchmarked in three areas:



**Economy** - including topics like job growth, salary levels and growth, small business growth, and innovation



**Talent** - including topics like population growth and migration trends, age demographics and labor participation, education levels, and technical workers



**Place** - including topics like new home construction, housing affordability, poverty levels, broadband access, tourism, and crime

## Data in this report

The data used in this report come primarily from federal agencies including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census Bureau, and Bureau of Economic Analysis. Additional sources include consultant reports to state tourism offices, the PatentsView system that aggregates data from the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office, and the Internal Revenue Service which provides income and asset data based on returns.

This report relies on data from the Census' American Community Survey (ACS), the most authoritative localized picture of population demographics across the U.S. Many ACS metrics in this report use the single-year estimates available for 2024, the latest year available. Some ACS-based metrics requiring a deeper cross-tabulation (e.g., net migration of college-educated adults; % of workers in technical fields), data was only available for the five-year estimates (2019-2024 average) and are noted in the source below each chart.





# Metrics included in the analysis

The following metrics are included in this report as indicators of Myrtle Beach’s relative, current state. To select these metrics, we considered government data that are (1) available for all U.S. counties, (2) can be consistently tracked, and (3) viewed as reliable measurements of a community’s economy, workforce, and quality of place. Over time, Project Grand Strand, the Myrtle Beach Chamber, and Visit Myrtle Beach (or other partners) may opt to update the data in this report to monitor progress.



## Economy

- Job growth
- GDP per capita
- Salary level
- Salary growth
- Household income
- Income growth
- Micro business growth
- Patents per capita



## Talent

- Population growth
- Domestic migration
- Median age
- Child population
- Working age population
- Growth of early career population
- Educated adults – Associate’s & Some College
- Educated adults – Bachelor’s or higher
- Labor force participation rate
- Migration of college-educated
- Technical workforce
- Professional workforce
- Remote workforce
- Women in management
- Non-white population



## Place

- Single-family permits per capita
- Multi-family permits per capita
- Median home price
- Home affordability
- Market rent
- Rent-to-income ratio
- Poverty rate
- Broadband connectivity
- Violent crime rate
- Direct tourism spending growth
- Airport enplanements growth
- Charitable giving

## How to read the charts

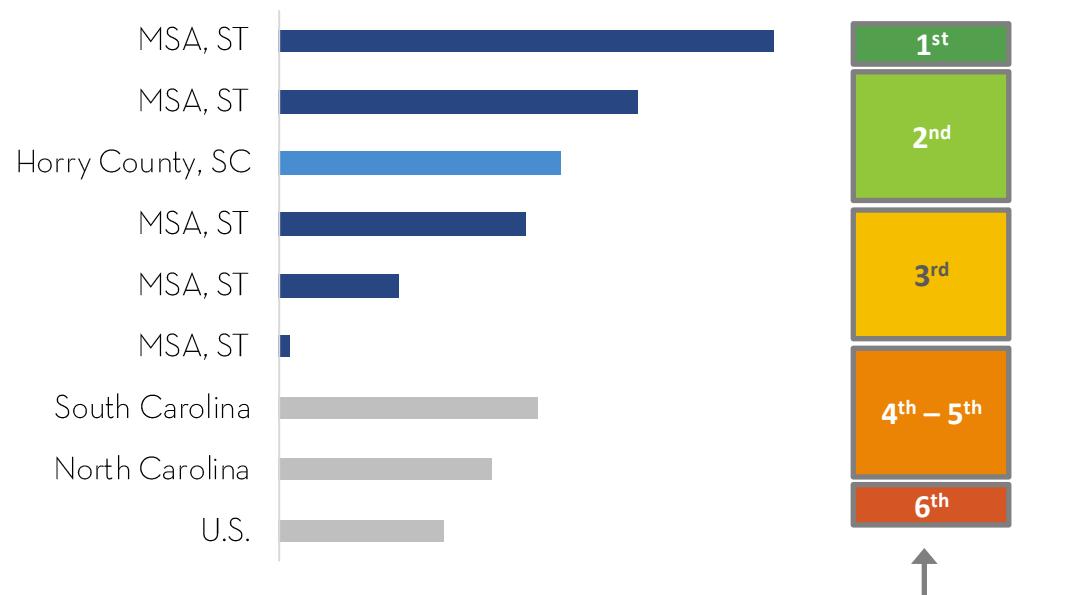
Metrics are each displayed in a single chart, showing values for each MSA and sorted from best to worst (usually largest to smallest value).

Myrtle Beach is highlighted in light blue, light green, or yellow to clearly show its ranking among the list of benchmark MSAs. South Carolina, North Carolina, and U.S. data are highlighted in grey at the bottom of the chart.

Myrtle Beach “performance” is measured by its ranking in the chart. A ranking of #1 is the best or most desired ranking and is displayed at the top of the chart. Myrtle Beach’s ranking is highlighted in a box below the chart that is color-coded to match its position among the six MSAs.

## Sample chart

Detailed description, with years and calculation method



Source: Publishing entity and additional information on source as needed

Myrtle Beach performance:



(Color coding matches Myrtle Beach's position in the rankings)



# Economy



## Economy benchmark highlights

Horry County increased its employment base by 7.9% from 2019 through 2024, which places it 3rd in its ranking among benchmarks, behind only Wilmington (+13.9%) and Charleston (+10.1%). In comparison, South Carolina grew 7.3% and the U.S. grew 4.6%.

Industry-level job growth data for Horry County (provided in the Appendix of this report) shows that the fastest-growing industries in the region are Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Transportation & Warehousing. Health Care & Social Assistance also created the most new jobs over the 5-year period. Accommodation & Food Services is an important part of the economy as well, reflecting 20.8% of all county jobs.

Horry County's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per Capita ranks last (6th) versus the benchmarks, which can be due to a large share of low-wage jobs or a lack of capital-intensive manufacturing industries. Salary levels in the county are indeed low (ranking 6th) versus peers but grew fastest (+38.1%) over the last five years (even exceeding the state and U.S. growth rates). (Note salary levels include part-time workers per Bureau of Labor Statistics data.)

Household income levels in Horry County are also low (which could be influenced by retiree populations) and household income grew slowly at 7.5% in the previous five years, resulting in a ranking of 5th for growth.

Micro-business growth (companies with nine employees or fewer), which is an indication of both startups and the financial stability of the small business community, grew by 16.8% between 2018-2023 in county. This result ranked the region 3rd among benchmarks.

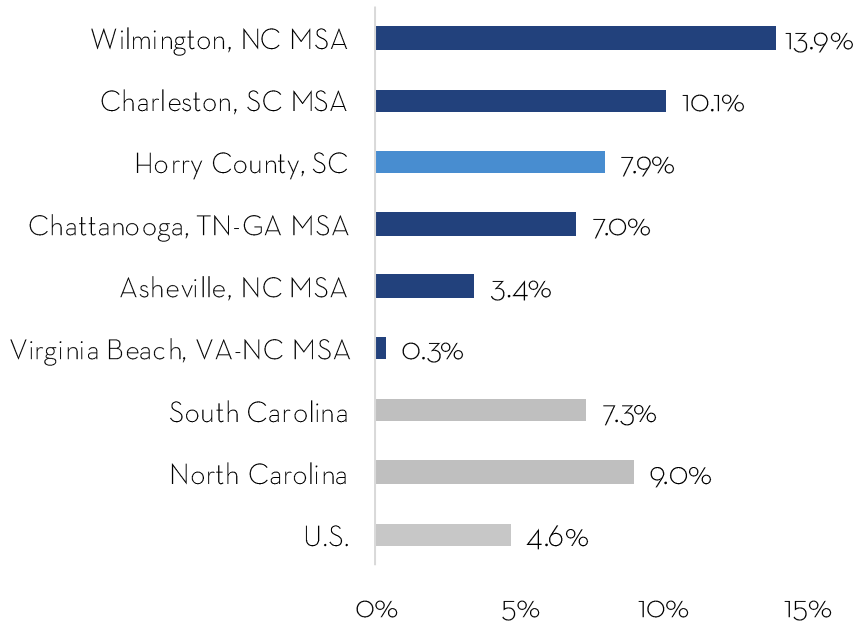
Patents per capita, which is an indication of innovation and technology penetration within the business community, are low in Horry County, ranking 5th among benchmarks.

Metric	Horry County Rank Out of 6
<b>Job Growth</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>GDP per capita</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Salary level</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Salary growth</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Household Income</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Income Growth</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Micro business growth</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Patents per capita</b>	<b>5</b>

# Economy

## Job Growth

Net growth of the number of employed workers, 2019-2024



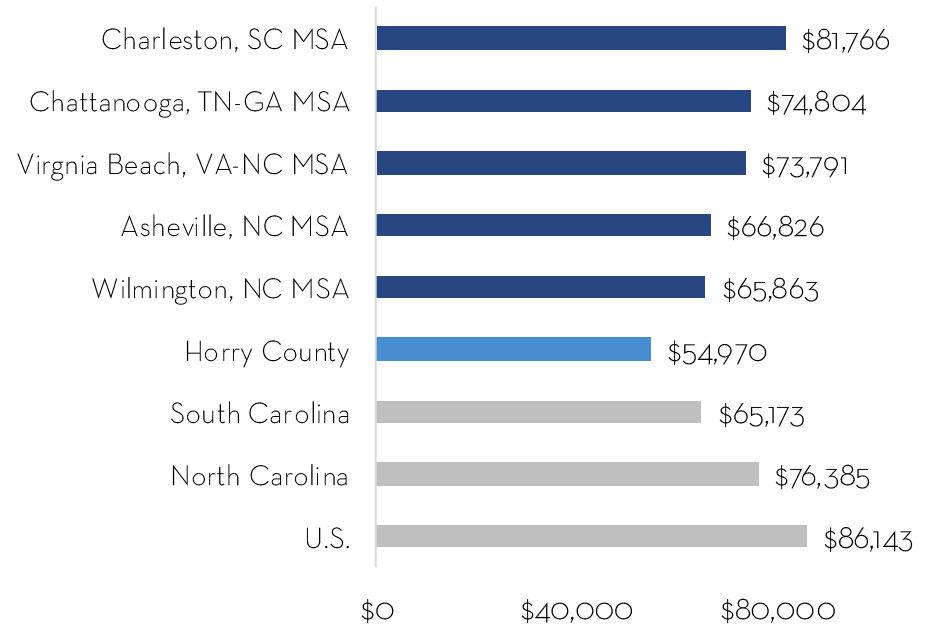
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics  
(Covered Employment & Wages series)

Myrtle Beach performance:



## GDP Per Capita

Gross Domestic Product per Person, 2024



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis

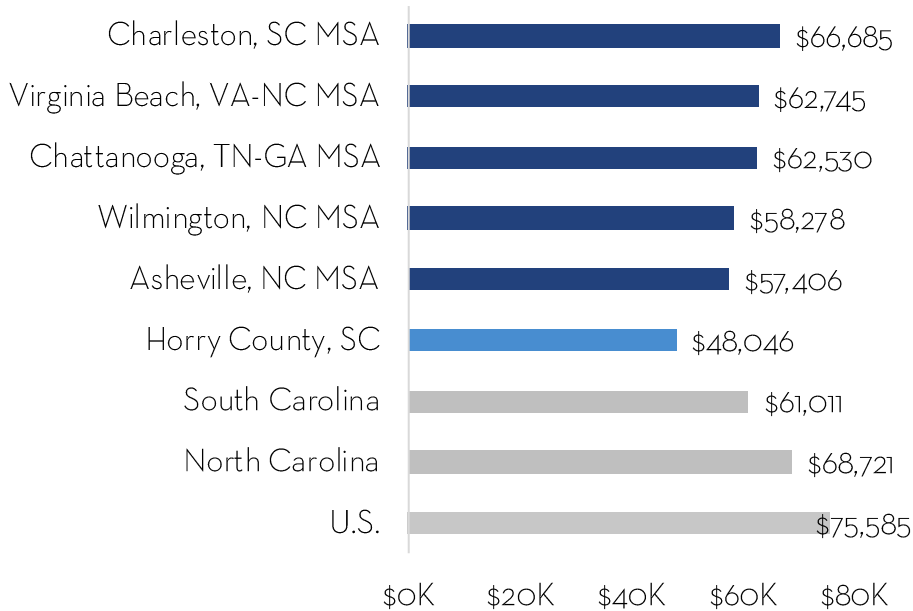
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Economy

## Salary Level

Average Salary of Jobs, 2024\*



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (Covered Employment & Wages series)

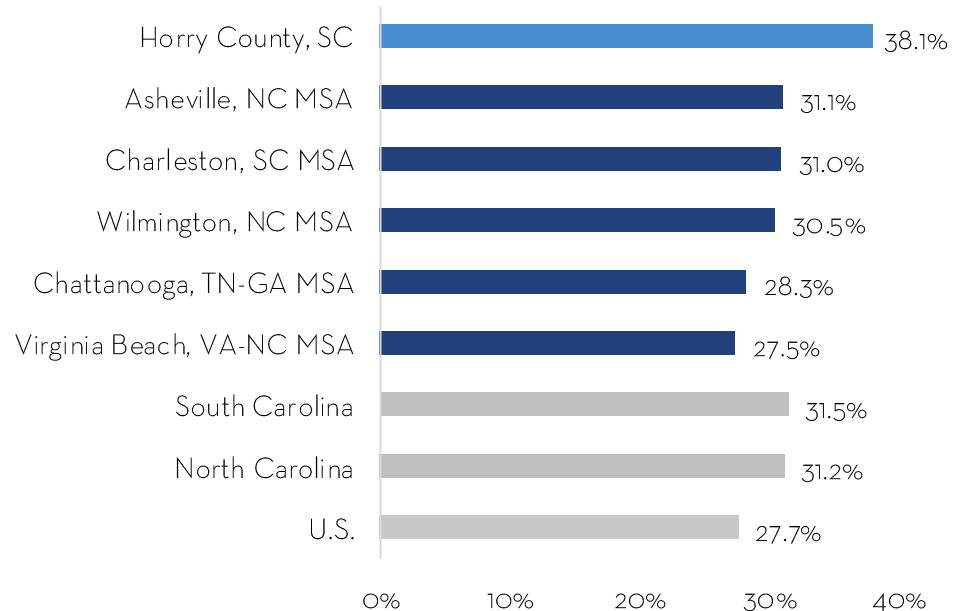
Myrtle Beach performance:



\*Includes part-time workers

## Salary Growth

% Change in Inflation-Adjusted Salary, 2019-2024



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (Covered Employment & Wages series)

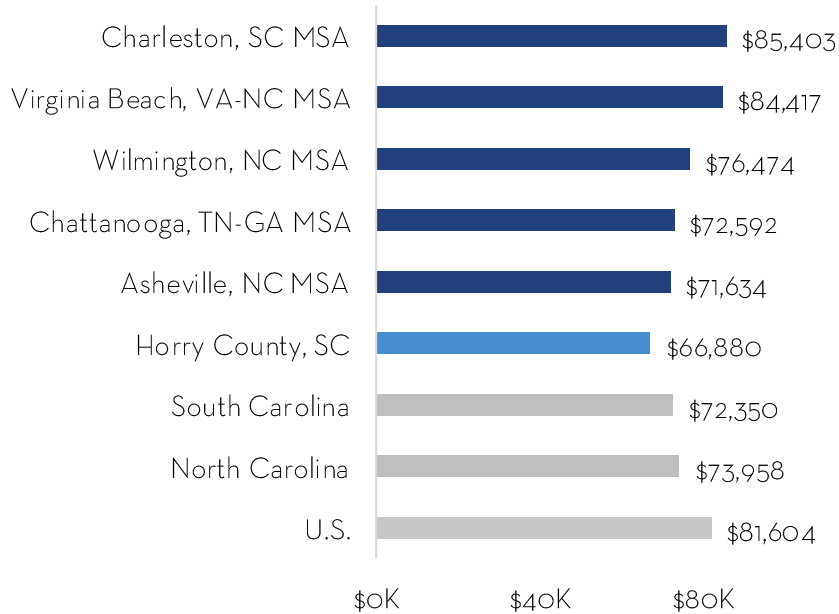
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Economy

## Household Income

Median Household Income, 2024



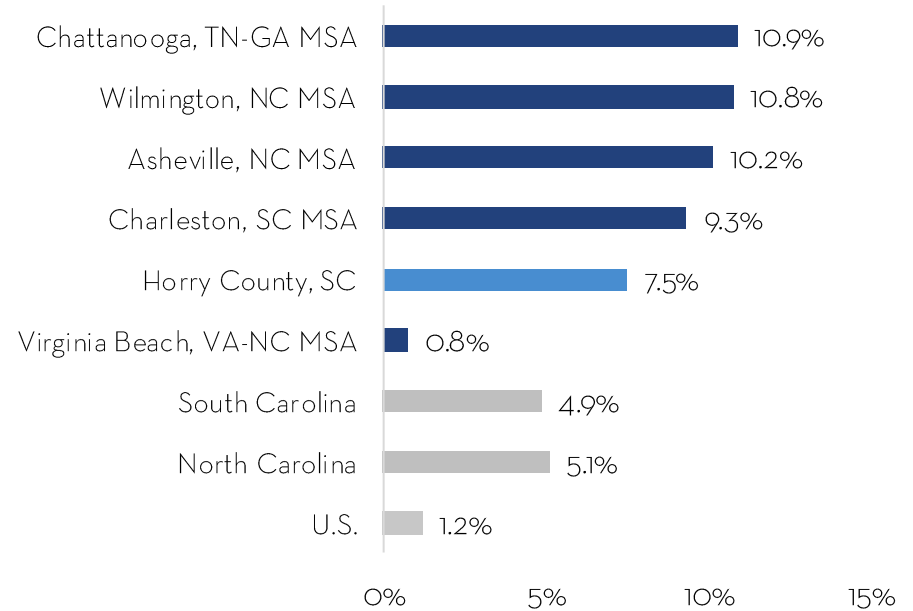
Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Income Growth

% Change in Inflation-Adjusted Median Household Income, 2019-2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

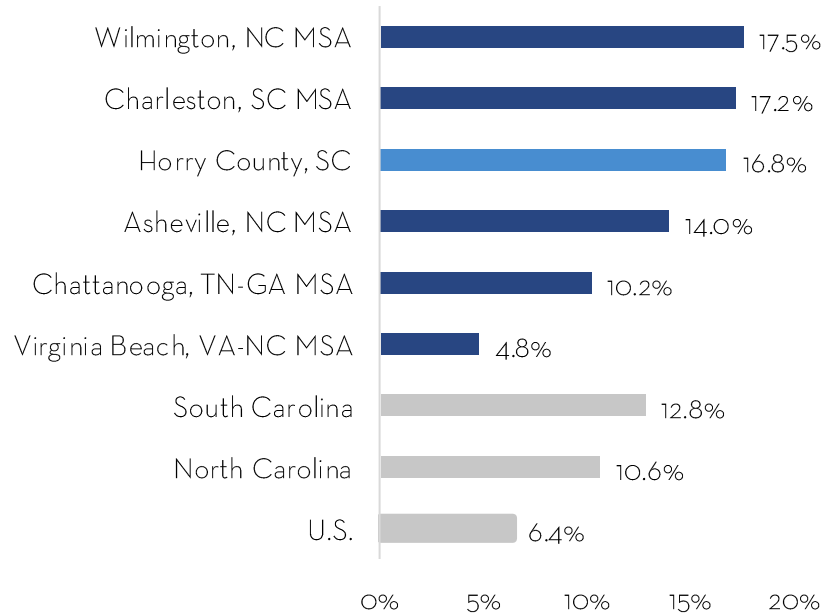
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Economy

## Micro Business Growth

Change in # of Non-Farm Businesses with 1-9 Employees, 2018-2023



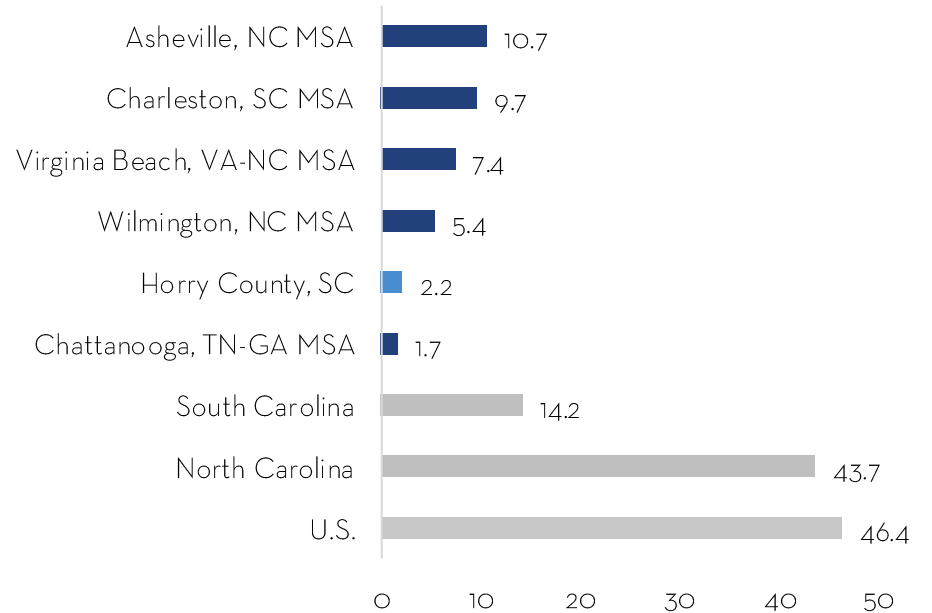
Source: US Census County Business Patterns; Businesses include corporations, partnerships, and sole proprietorships with paid employees, but not farms or non-employers

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Patents Per Capita

Utility & Design Patents by County of First Inventor per 100,000 Population, 2024



Source: US Patent & Trademark Office; PatentsView

Myrtle Beach performance:





# Talent



## Talent benchmark highlights

Horry County is gaining population, growing 17.0% from 2020-2025 and ranking 1st among benchmarks. Similarly, the county's domestic migration rate is better than other benchmarks, compensating for a low child population rate and high median age.

Furthermore, the county has a relatively low share of population of "working age" (25-64 years old) and ranks 4th among benchmarks for growth in the young professionals population (26-44 years old). These two metrics and rankings suggest the population is heavily-weighted toward late-career or retired people.

The education level of Horry County shows some ambiguity. About 34.9% of the county's civilian labor force (those employed or looking for work) has an associate's degree or some college (without attaining a degree), ranking 1st among benchmarks. An additional 30.9% of the civilian labor force has a bachelor's degree or higher, ranking the county 6th.

Horry County has a relatively low share of its workforce in technical occupations (just 3.1% and ranking 6th) and low share of its workforce in non-hospitality service industry sectors (23.2% also ranking 6th). However, the region has a high share of women in management positions in the workforce (ranking 1st), which can be a positive signal to employers of labor availability.

Horry County's non-white (and non-Hispanic) population stands at 18.4%, ranking 4th versus the benchmarks (and significantly behind the state average of 33.1%).

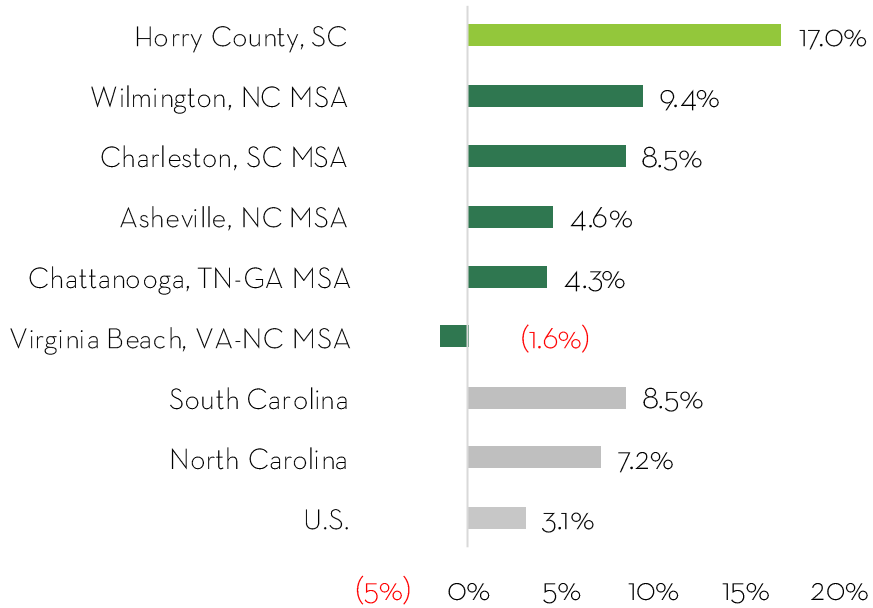
Approximately 12.7% of the county workforce works from home, which is about average for a ranking of 4th versus the benchmarks.

Metric	Horry County Rank Out of 6
<b>Population growth</b>	1
<b>Domestic migration</b>	1
<b>Median age</b>	6
<b>Child population</b>	6
<b>Working age population</b>	6
<b>Growth of early career population</b>	4
<b>Educated adults - Associate's &amp; Some College</b>	1
<b>Educated adults - Bachelor's or higher</b>	6
<b>Labor force participation rate</b>	6
<b>Migration of college-educated (associate's or higher)</b>	1
<b>Technical workforce</b>	6
<b>Remote workforce</b>	4
<b>Professional workforce concentration</b>	6
<b>Women in management</b>	1
<b>Non-white population</b>	4

# Talent

## Population Growth

Net Population Growth, 2020-2025



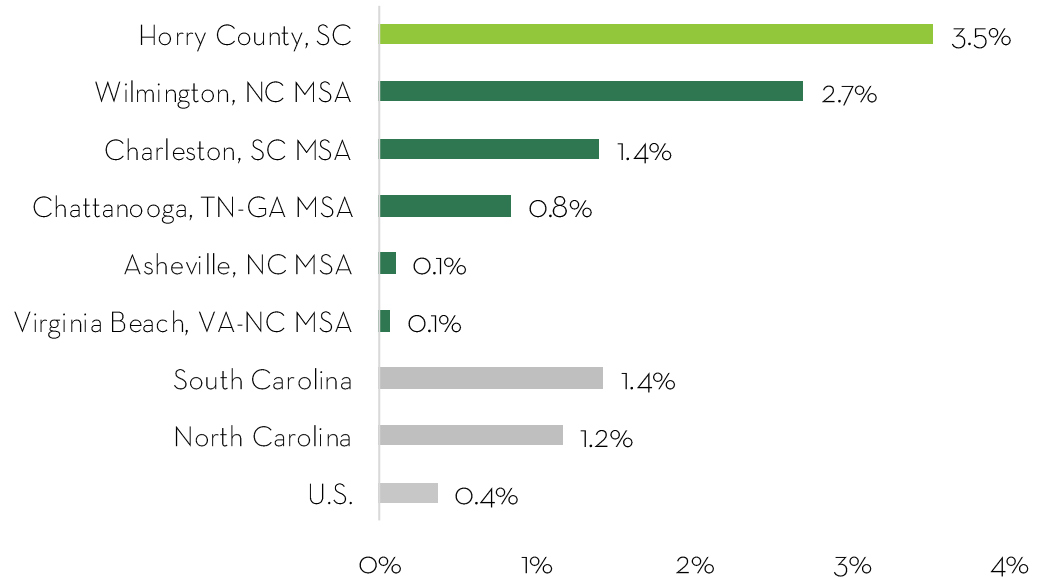
Source: US Census Population Estimates Program

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Domestic Migration

Total Net Domestic Migration in 2025 as % of 2025 Total Population



Source: US Census Population Estimates Program

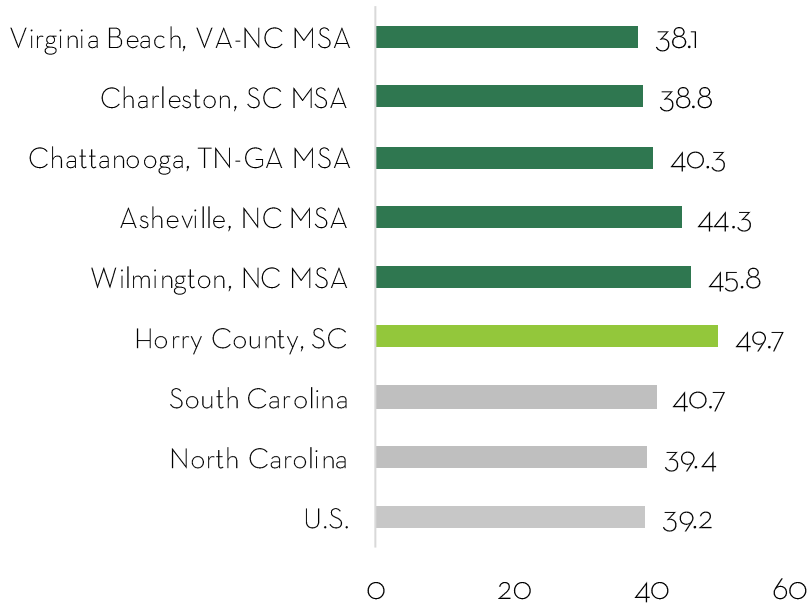
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Talent

## Median Age

Median Age, 2024



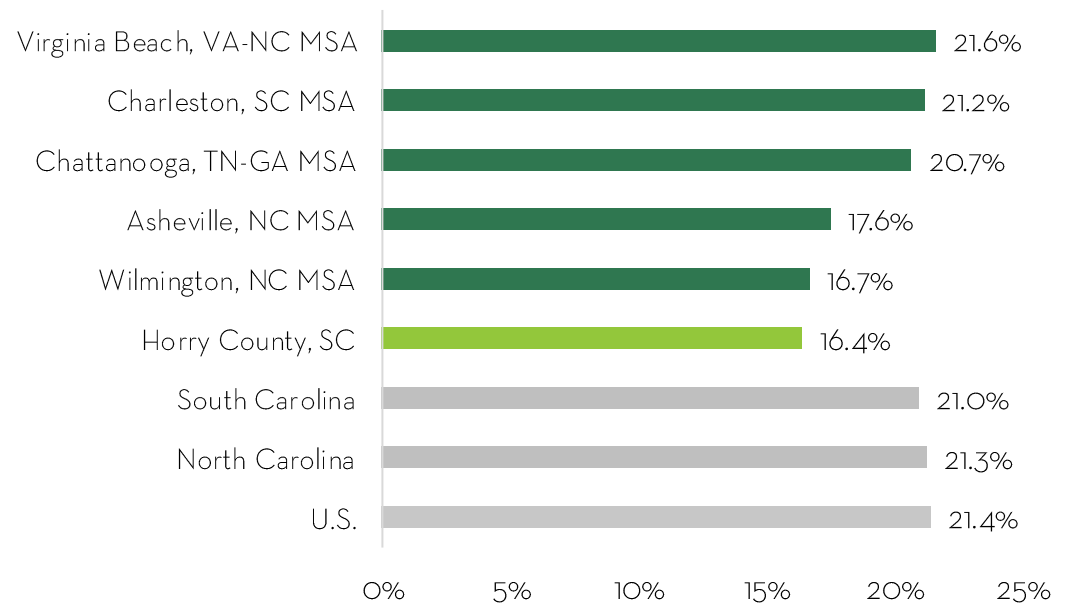
Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Child Population

Population 18 Years Old or Younger as a % of Total Population, 2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

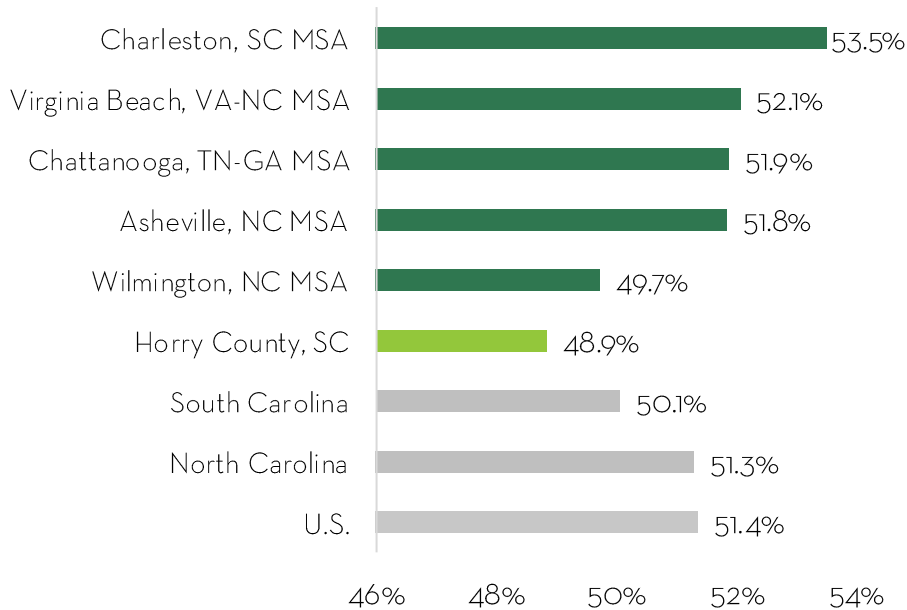
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Talent

## Working Age Population

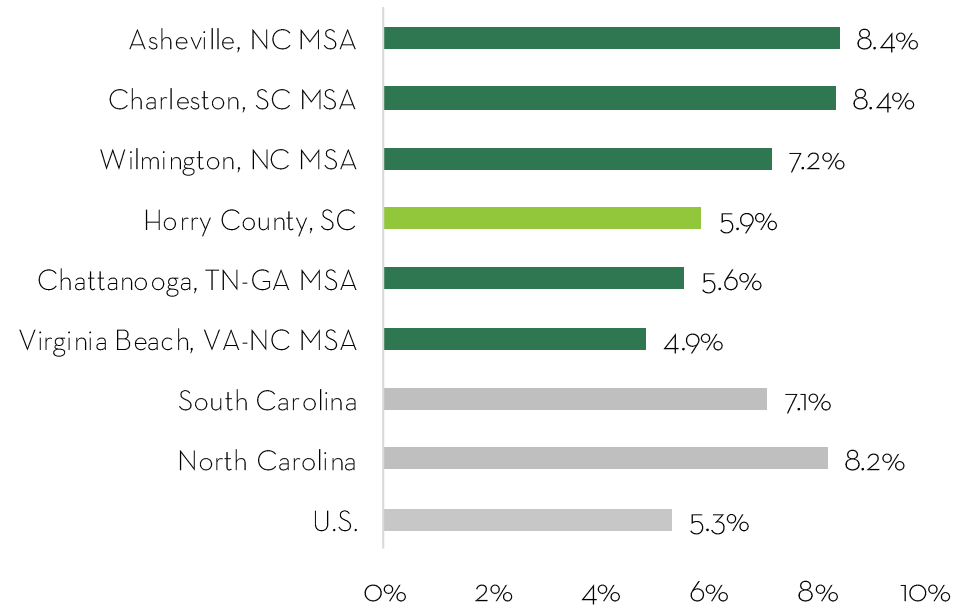
Population 25-64 Years of Age as % of Total Population, 2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

## Growth of Young Professionals Population

% Growth in Population 25-44 Years of Age, 2019-2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:



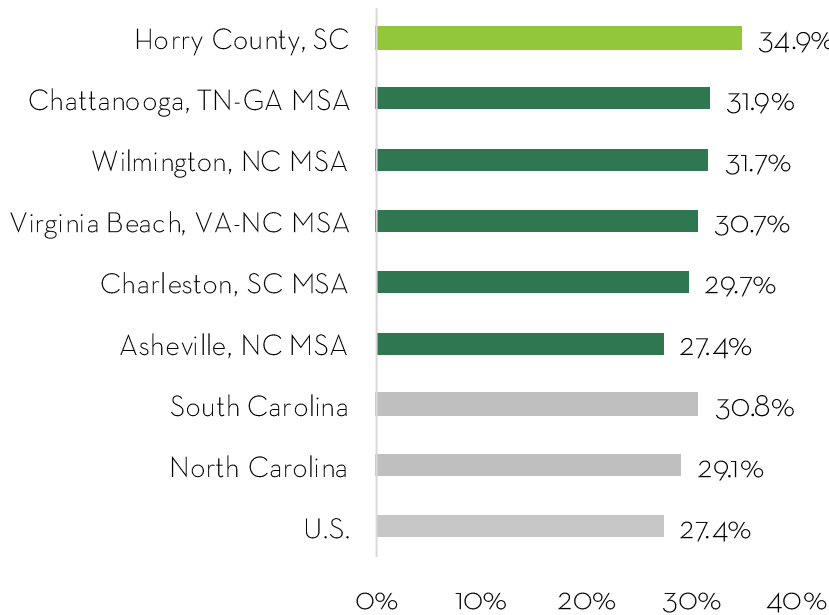
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Talent

## Population with Some College or Associate's degree

% of Civilian Labor Force, 25+ Year's of Age, with Some College or an Associate's Degree, 2024



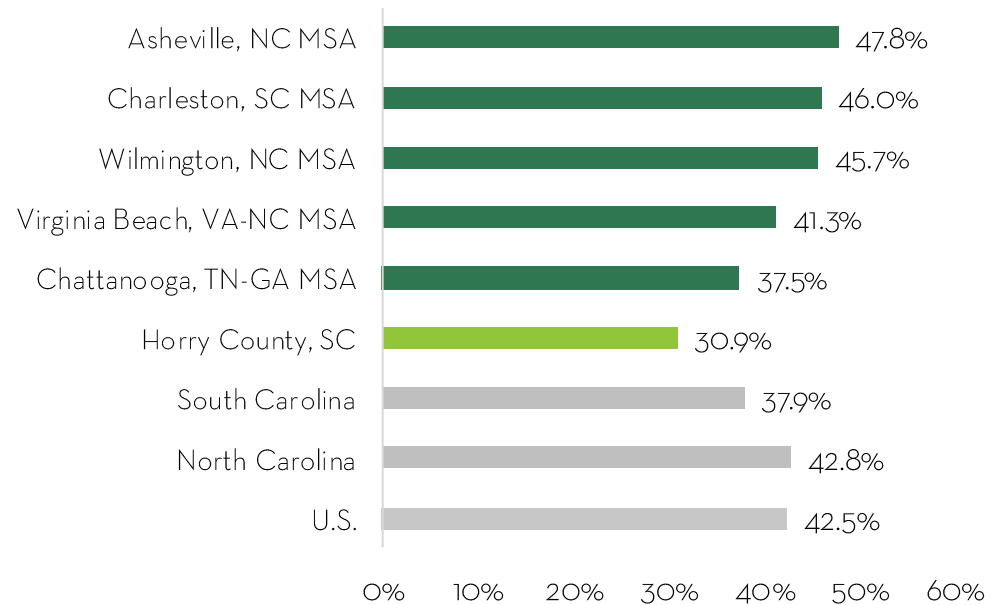
Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher

% of Civilian Labor Force, 25+ Year's of Age, with a Bachelor's Degree or higher, 2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

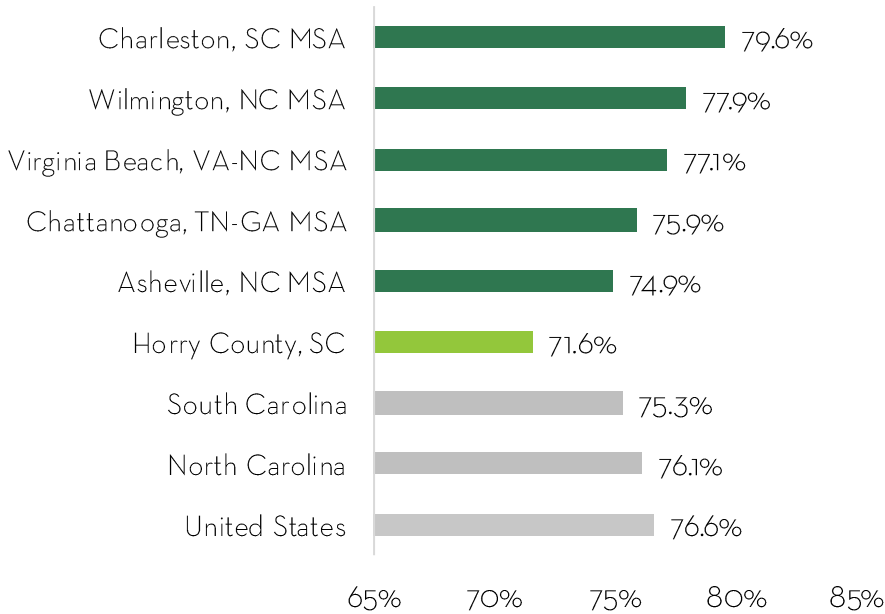
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Talent

## Labor Force Participation Rate

% of Population 16-64 Years of Age in the Labor Force (Employed or Looking for a Job), 2024



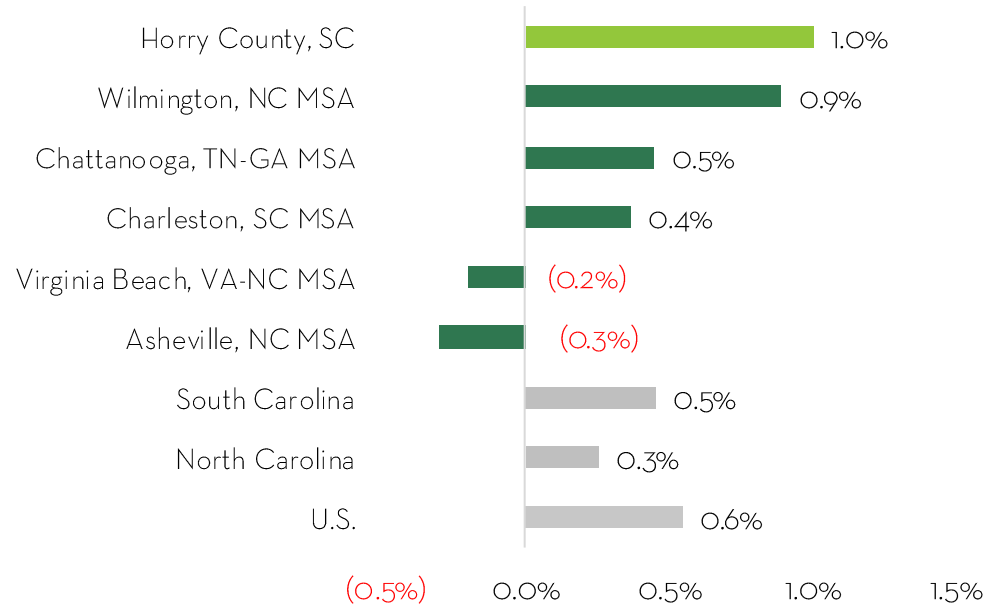
Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Migration of College-Educated

Net Domestic Migration of Population with an Associate's Degree or Higher, 2024, as % of Total Population



Source: US Census American Community Survey

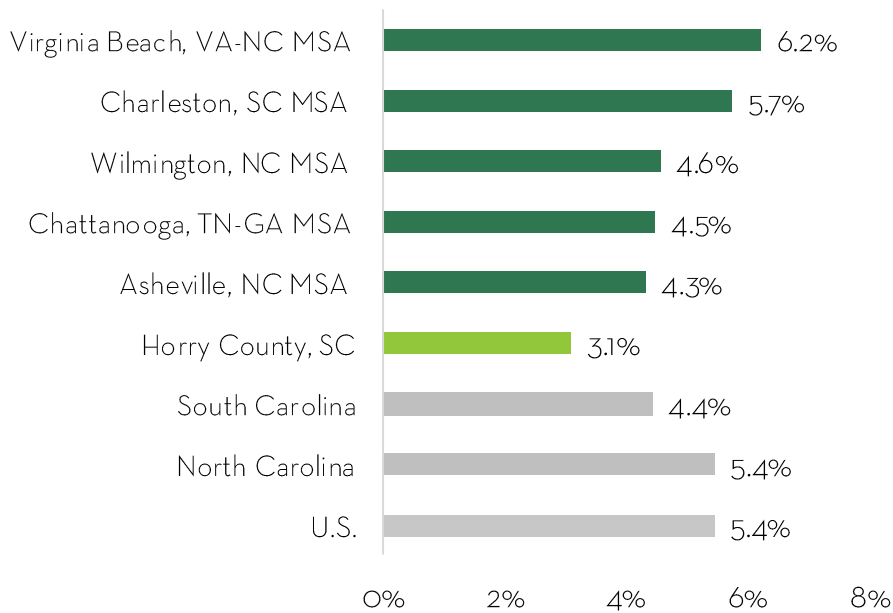
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Talent

## Technical Workforce

% of Civilian Employed Workers in Computer, Engineering, & Science Occupations (Not incl. Health, 2024)



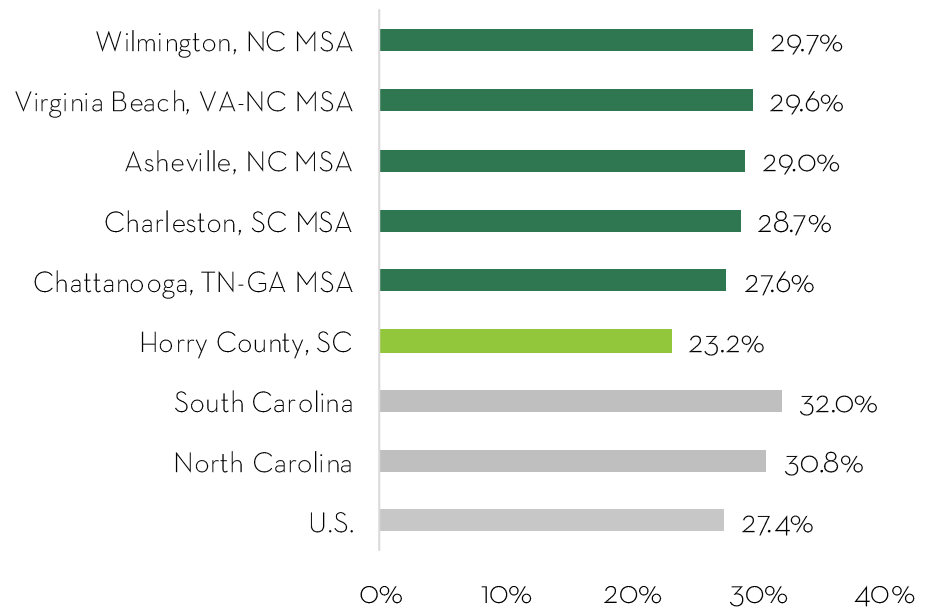
Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Non-Hospitality Service Workforce

% of Civilian Employed Workers in Information, Finance & Insurance, Real Estate & Rental & Leasing, Professional Services, Management of Companies & Enterprises, and Health Care & Social Assistance Sectors



Source: Data Tactical Group

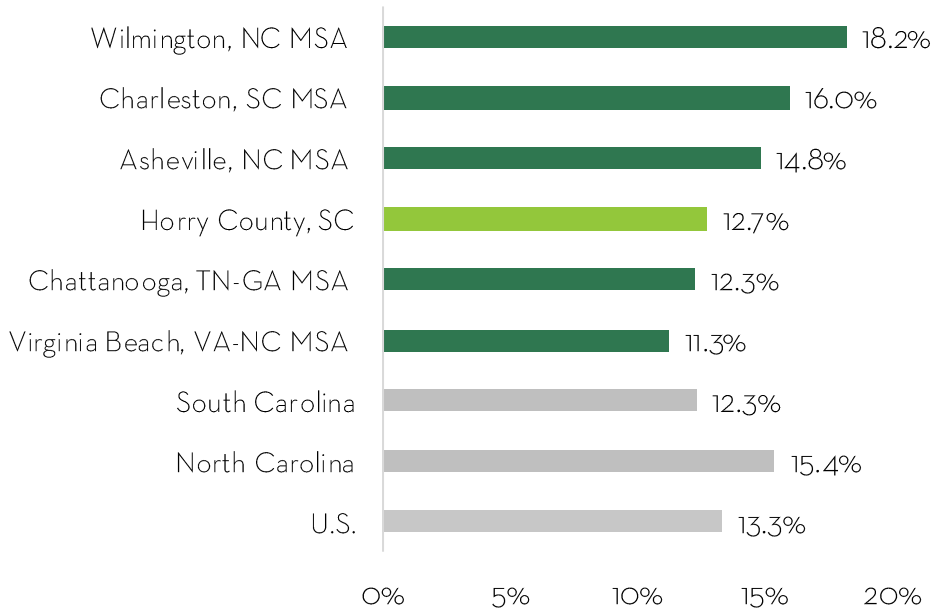
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Talent

## Remote Workforce

% of Workers 16+ Years of Age that Work From Home in a Typical Week, 2024



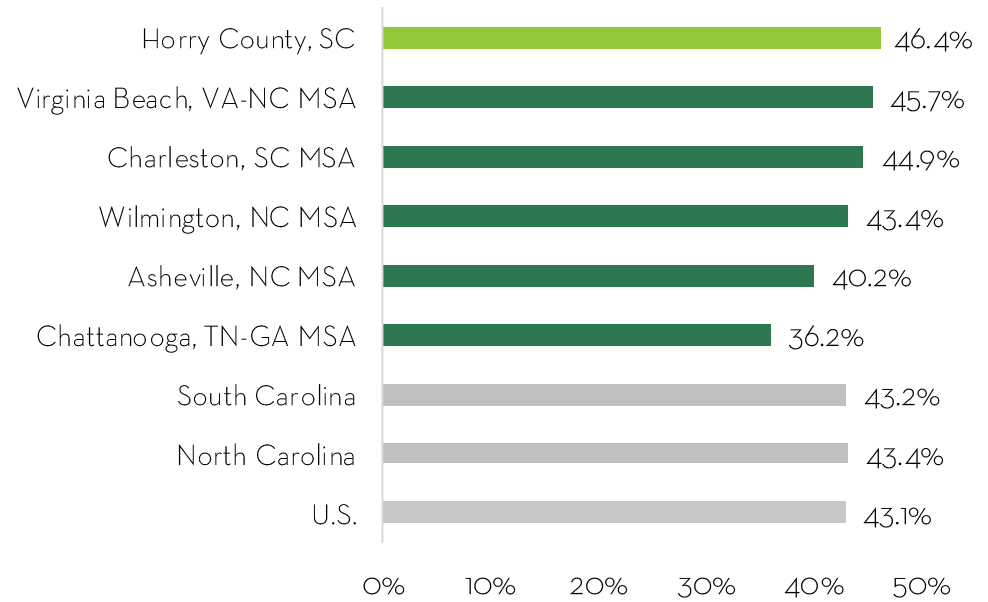
Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Women in Management

% Female of Civilian Employed Workers in Management Positions, 2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

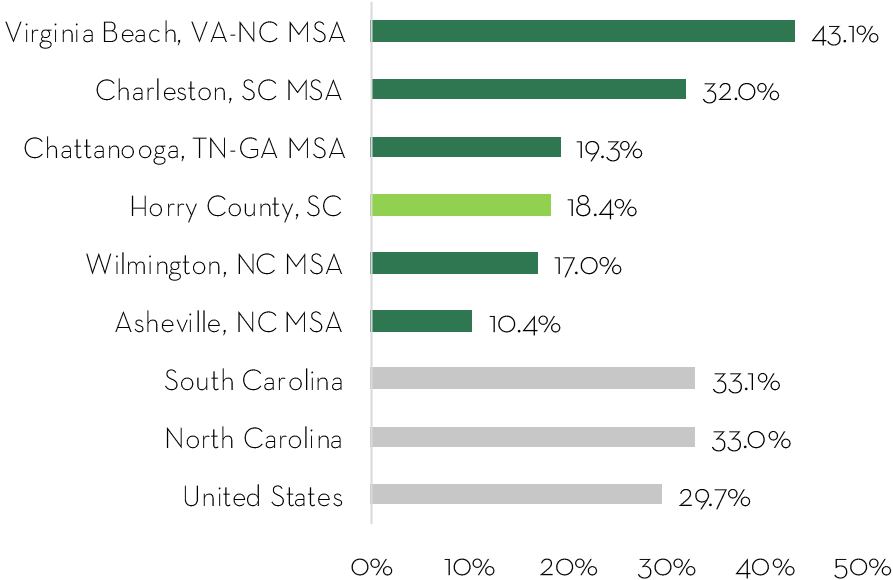
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Talent

## Non-White Population

% of Population other than White, Non-Hispanic, 2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:





# Place



## Place benchmark highlights

Horry County performs better in the Place category than Economy and Talent, primarily due to its low costs relative to other benchmark counties. The county ranks best for median home price (lowest price). Home affordability in terms of price-to-income also ranks 1st. Market rents are also low (ranking 3rd best), though rent-to-income ranks last (6th) for Horry County.

New residential construction activity has positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, the county ranks 1st for single-family housing permits issued per capita. However, the region ranks 6th for multi-family housing permits issued per capita.

The poverty rate in Horry County (15.1%) is high versus benchmarks (ranking worst among the 6 MSAs and higher than the state and national averages).

Broadband connectivity (percent with service availability) in Horry County is high (99.3%), ranking 1st among all benchmark MSAs.

Tourism-related metrics bode well for the county. Tourism spending ranks 2nd best at about \$6.3 billion (2023) and shows strong growth. Airport enplanements growth ranks 1st over the five-year period (+47.4%).

Violent crime is slightly above-average among benchmarks (ranking 5th among benchmarks). With that in mind, crime rates are reported in relation to the number of full-time residents. Due to Myrtle Beach's nature as a visitor destination, there are frequently more people in the region during the day, especially in the summer. These day-time visitors are not captured for official statistics measuring purposes, which can lead to inflated crime statistics if committed by visitors. It is not possible to separate data for crimes committed solely by full-time residents.

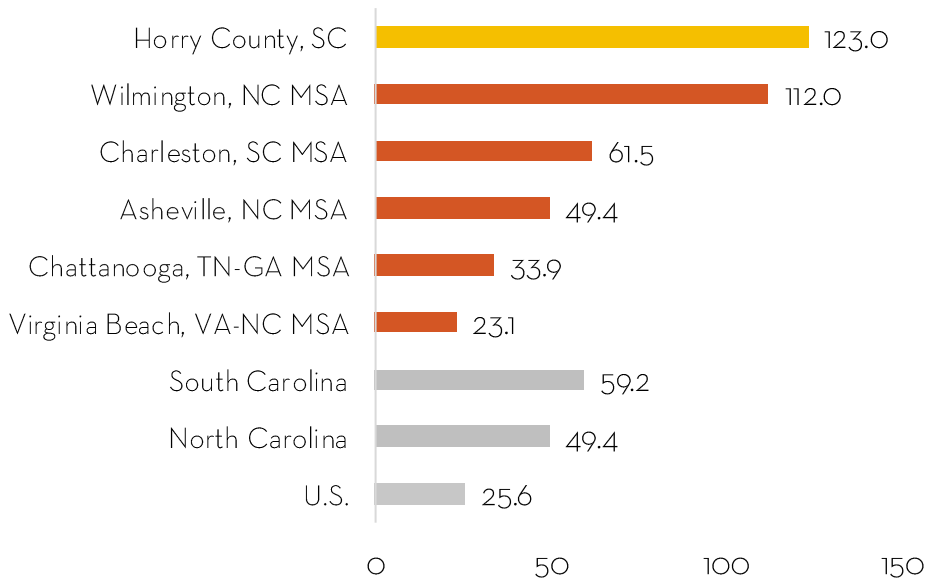
Charitable giving in Horry County region is low, ranking 6th. However, it does amount to over \$13,000 per tax return filed.

Metric	Horry County Rank Out of 6
Single-family permits per capita	1
Multi-family permits per capita	6
Median home price	1
Home affordability	1
Market rent	3
Rent-to-income ratio	6
Poverty rates	6
Broadband connectivity	1
Crime	5
Tourism Spending	2
Airport Enplanement Growth	1
Charitable giving	6

# Place

## Single-Family Permits

Average Single-Family Units Permitted, 2014-2024  
per 10,000 Population (2024)



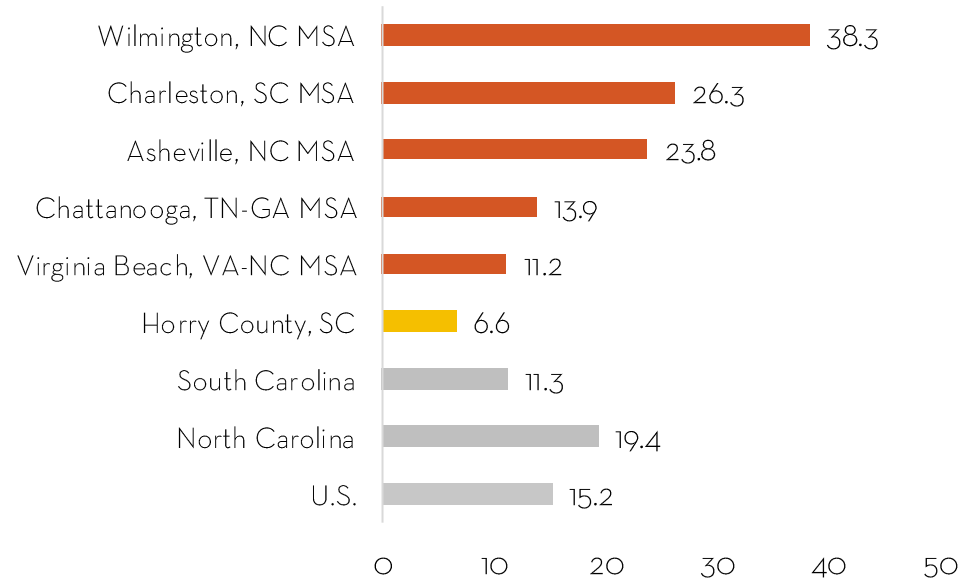
Source: US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Multi-Family Permits

Average Multi-Family Units Permitted, 2014-2024  
per 10,000 Population (2024)



Source: US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development

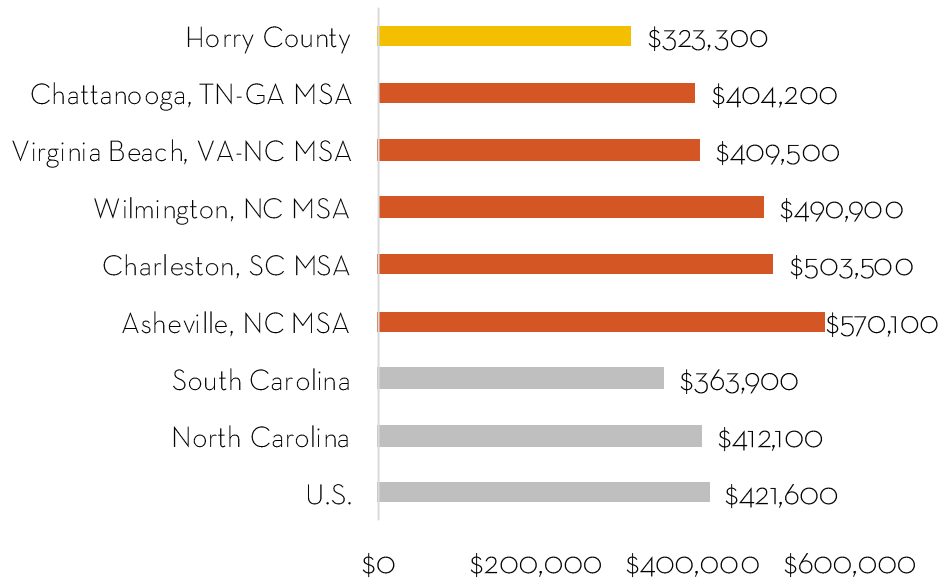
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Place

## Median Home Price

Median List Price, 12-Month Average from May 2025 - April 2026



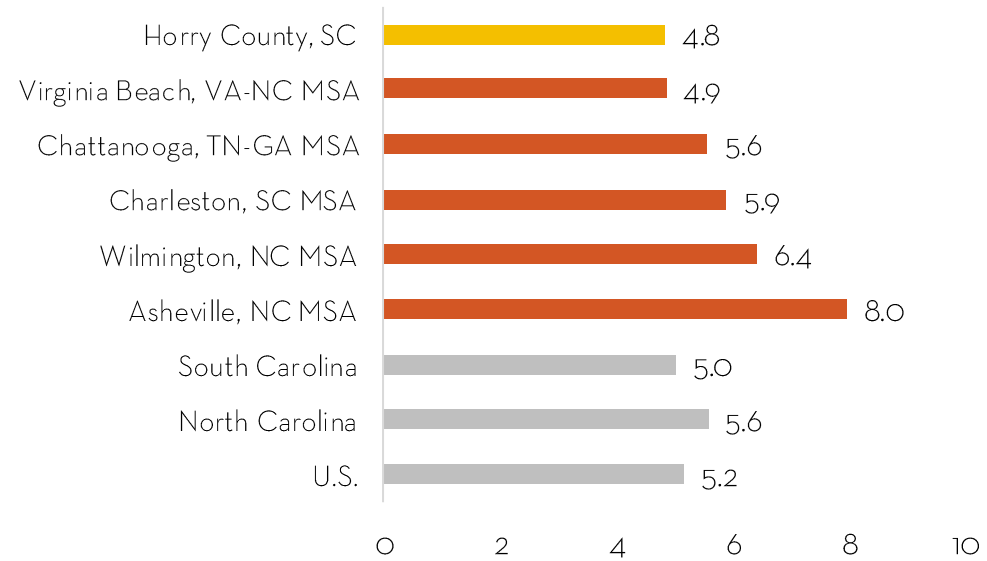
Source: Realtor.com Economic Research

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Home Affordability

Ratio of Median List Price (12-Month Average) to Median Household Income (2024)



Source: US Census American Community Survey; Realtor.com Economic Research

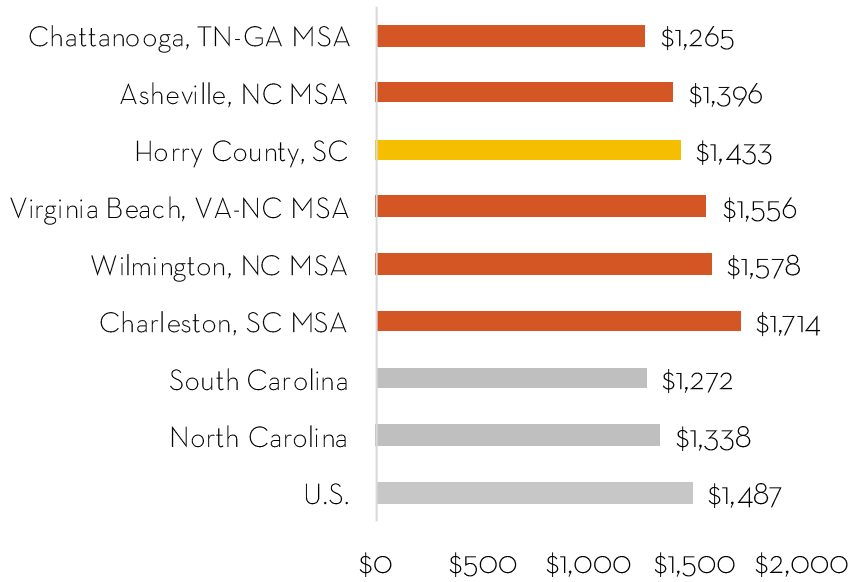
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Place

## Market Rent

Median Gross Rent, 2024



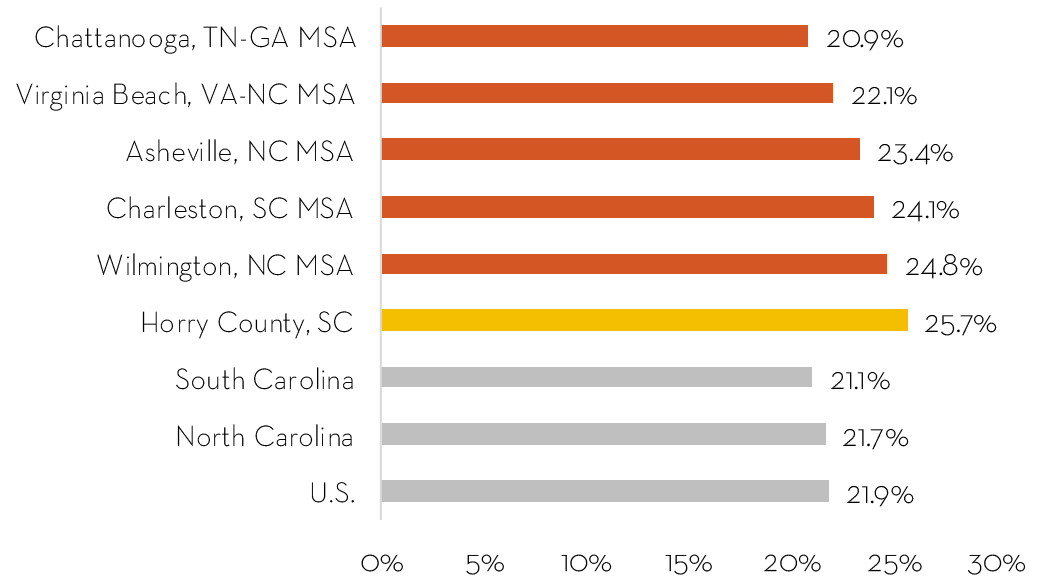
Source: US Census American Community Survey

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Rent-to-Income Ratio

Ratio of Median Gross Annual Rent to Median Household Income (Monthly), 2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

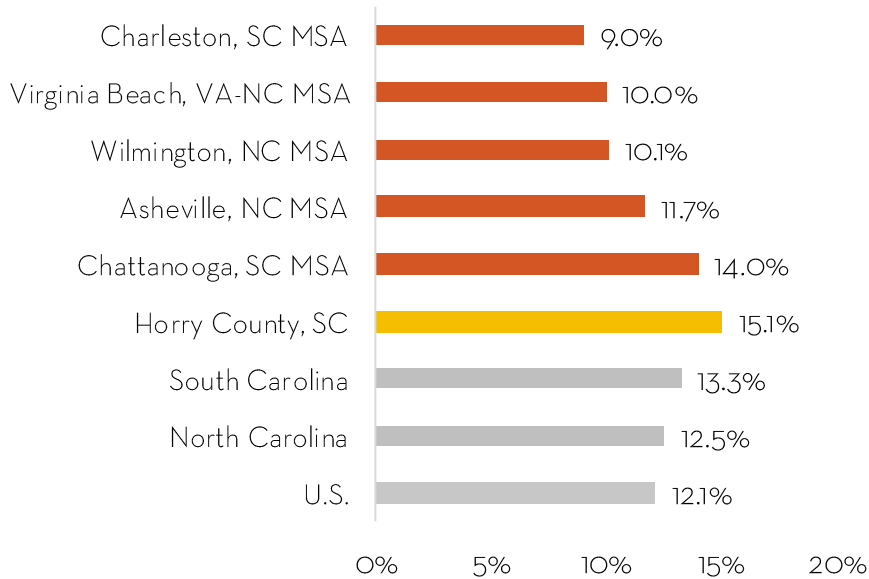
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Place

## Poverty Rate

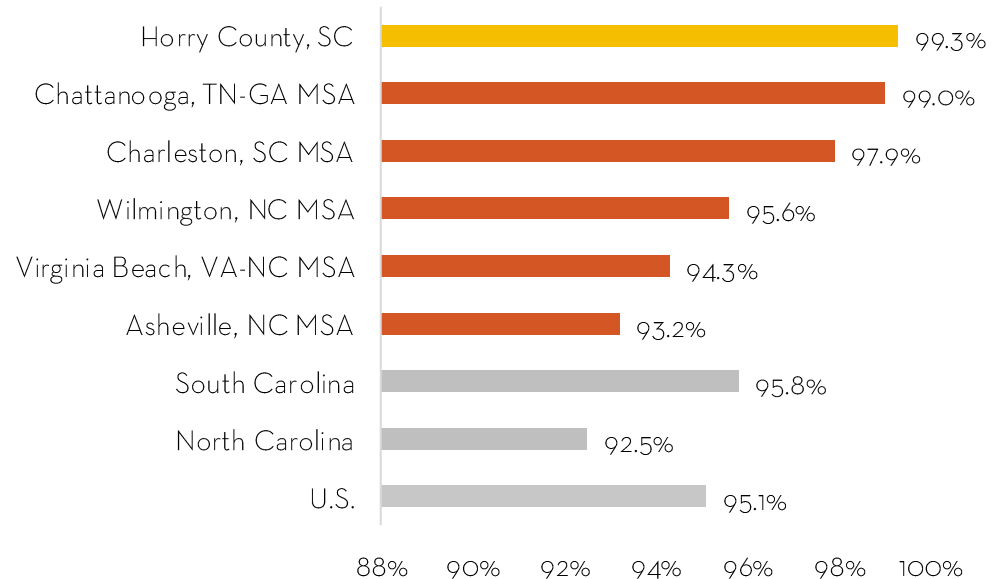
% of Households in Poverty, 2024



Source: US Census American Community Survey

## Broadband Connectivity

% of Serviceable Locations (Homes, Businesses) with Broadband Service (as of 6/30/2025)



Source: FCC National Broadband Map

Myrtle Beach performance:



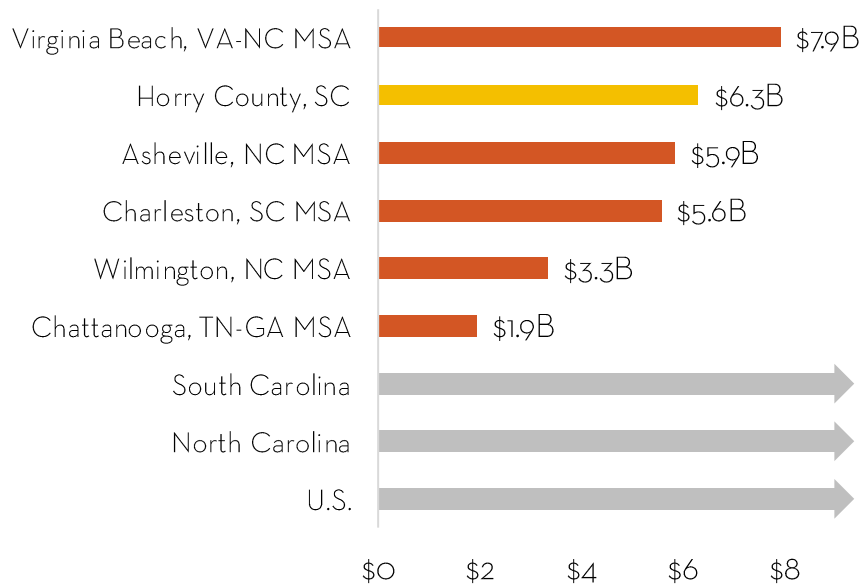
Myrtle Beach performance:



# Place

## Tourism Spending

Direct Tourist Spending in billions of dollars, 2023  
(nominal, not inflation-adjusted)\*



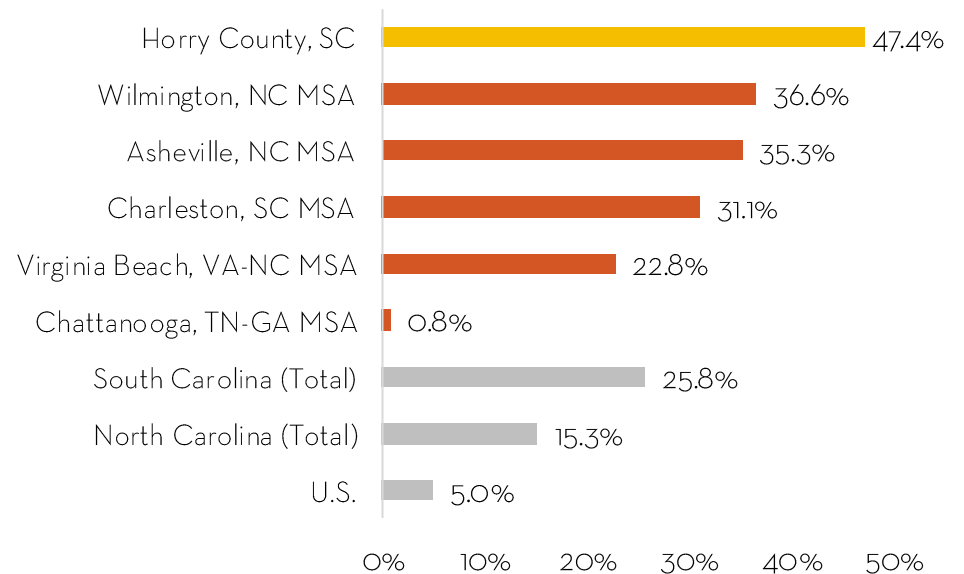
Source: Dean Runyan Associates; Tourism Economics

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Airport Enplanements

% Growth in Commercial Service Enplanements from  
the Major Airport within each MSA, 2019-2024



Source: FAA Passenger Boarding & All-Cargo Data

Myrtle Beach performance:

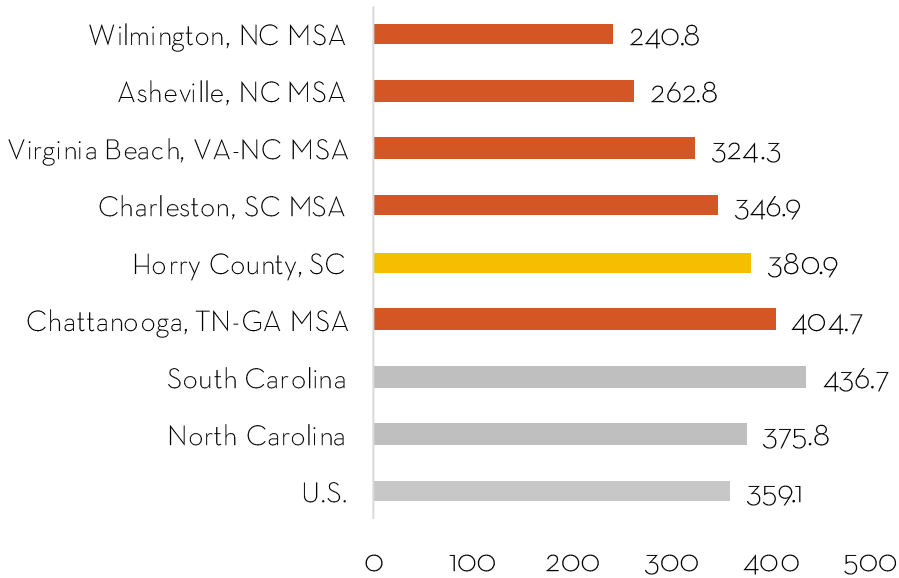


\*Direct tourist spending totals for South Carolina, North Carolina, and the United States are \$23.6 billion, \$35.6 billion, and \$1.3 trillion, respectively.

# Place

## Violent Crime Rate

Violent Crimes Reported per 100,000 Residents, 2024\*



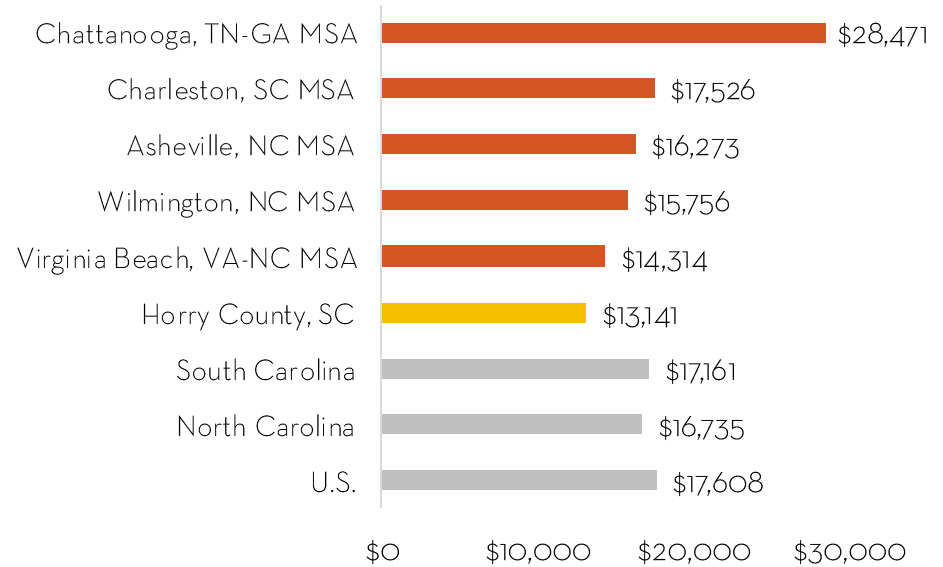
Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting System (UCR)

Myrtle Beach performance:



## Charitable Giving

Total Charitable Contributions per Tax Return with Charitable Contributions Filed, 2022



Source: IRS Statistics of Income (SOI)

Myrtle Beach performance:



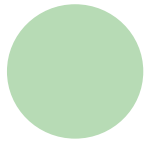
\*Crime rates are reported in relative to full-time residents. Due to Myrtle Beach's destination nature, there are frequently more people in the region during the day, especially in the summer. These day-time visitors are not captured for official statistics measuring purposes, which can lead to inflated crime statistics if committed by visitors. It is not possible to separate the data for crimes committed by residents alone.

Supplemental Data:

# Industry Growth and Occupational Concentration

# Industry Sector Employment Concentration & Growth, Myrtle Beach MSA, 2019-2025

The following slide illustrates Horry County / Myrtle Beach MSA employment across 20 industry clusters. The chart indicates three metrics that together tell the story of the area's economy since 2019.



The size of the circle indicates the total employment in the cluster in 2025. The larger the circle, the more jobs are in that sector.



The horizontal position of the cluster indicates its growth rate between 2019 and 2025. Those to the right of the "0" vertical line have grown since 2019, and those to the left have lost employment.

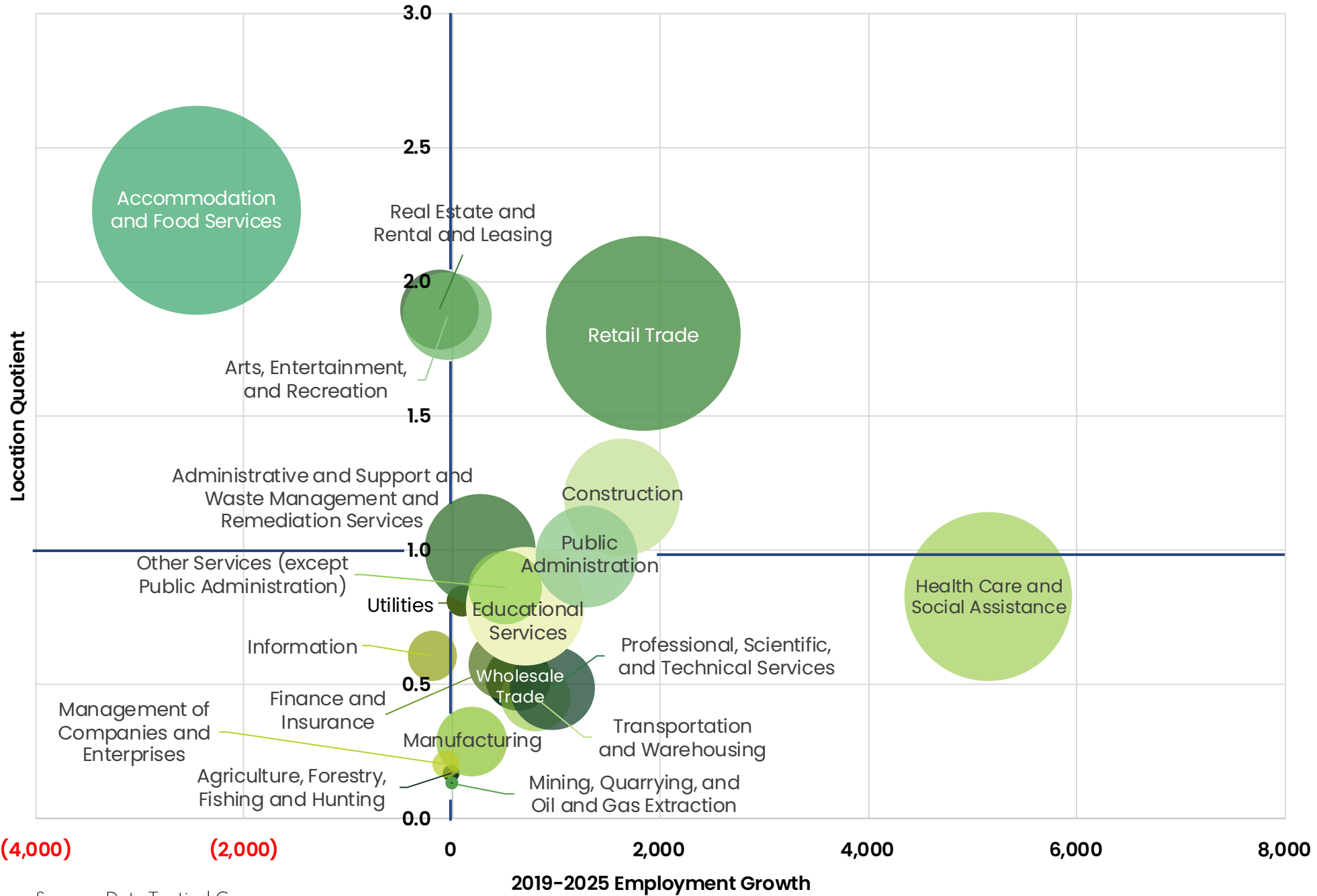


The vertical position of the cluster indicates its concentration of employment relative to the U.S. average. Those above the "0" horizontal line have a higher-than-average concentration of jobs in Horry County, and those below the line have a lower-than average concentration.

## These factors combined can help inform economic and community development efforts

- If a cluster is in the **upper right quadrant**, it is a strong industry and growing. Concerted business retention and expansion efforts could help them maintain their strength in the county over time.
- If a cluster is in the **upper left quadrant**, it is a highly concentrated but could need community investments to help accelerate growth.
- If a cluster is in the **lower left quadrant**, it is weak in Horry County. It could indicate that the county is not a competitive location for the industry. If one of these industries is a desired target for future economic growth, it will need concerted investment.
- If a cluster is in the **lower right quadrant**, it is strong and emerging. These are often strong targets for business attraction and entrepreneurship support.

# Industry Sector Employment Concentration & Growth, Myrtle Beach MSA, 2019-2025



Source: Data Tactical Group

Benchmark Analysis

## Occupational Employment Concentration & Growth, Myrtle Beach MSA, 2020-2025

Occupation	2025 Employment	% of Total	5-Yr Change	5-Yr % Growth	Location Quotient
Food preparation and serving related occupations	25,481	17.4%	4,568	21.8%	2.00
Sales and related occupations	20,803	14.2%	1,575	8.2%	1.66
Office and administrative support occupations	17,706	12.1%	1,933	12.3%	1.00
Transportation and material moving occupations	11,199	7.7%	2,467	28.3%	0.86
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	9,351	6.4%	2,810	43.0%	1.02
Management occupations	7,212	4.9%	1,831	34.0%	0.72
Educational instruction and library occupations	6,740	4.6%	284	4.4%	0.79
Construction and extraction occupations	6,590	4.5%	1,060	19.2%	1.09
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	6,514	4.5%	1,188	22.3%	1.14
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	6,447	4.4%	52	0.8%	1.50
Healthcare support occupations	4,958	3.4%	1,165	30.7%	0.67
Personal care and service occupations	4,563	3.1%	1,298	39.8%	1.51
Business and financial operations occupations	4,548	3.1%	1,257	38.2%	0.47
Production occupations	3,840	2.6%	727	23.4%	0.47
Protective service occupations	3,672	2.5%	374	11.3%	1.05
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	1,567	1.1%	444	39.5%	0.81
Community and social service occupations	1,293	0.9%	198	18.1%	0.52
Computer and mathematical occupations	1,292	0.9%	377	41.2%	0.27
Legal occupations	989	0.7%	139	16.4%	0.82
Architecture and engineering occupations	810	0.6%	134	19.8%	0.33
Life, physical, and social science occupations	451	0.3%	60	15.3%	0.34
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	102	0.1%	10	10.9%	0.24
<b>Total</b>	<b>146,128</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>23,951</b>	<b>19.6%</b>	<b>--</b>

Source: Data Tactical Group

# Methodology

# Selecting benchmark MSAs

To choose the benchmark MSAs for this report, we followed a filtering process that mimics a basic site selection process. The criteria (listed below) considered factors like geographic location within the U.S., population size, industry composition, income levels, and educational attainment.

We began with a list of all MSAs that had populations between 250,000 and 500,000 (as of 2025) and were in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee. After discussion with the client, additional factors were taken into consideration to focus on beneficial and competitively relevant communities. A full criteria list for our initial scan is featured below, along with the full titles of each benchmark MSA, including Myrtle Beach.

Following an objective approach like this is helpful in eliminating the bias that sometimes occurs when places choose who they are compared against. The benchmark list is not necessarily indicative of best practices. The report will explore good ideas from communities across the U.S. that are relevant and inspiring to Myrtle Beach.

## Initial Benchmark Scan Criteria

- Located in a southeastern/east coast state: ME, NH, MA, CT, RI, NY, NJ, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, MS, LA, TN
- Population is at between 250,000 and 500,000 as of 2025
- Positive population growth (2020-2025)
- Hospitality LQ > 1.5
- Comparable median household income (At least \$65,000)
- Similar educational attainment (at least 40.0% with an associate's degree or higher)

## Selected Benchmark MSAs

- Horry County: Myrtle Beach-Conway-North Myrtle Beach, SC MSA
- Charleston: Charleston-North Charleston, SC MSA
- Asheville: Asheville, NC MSA
- Wilmington: Wilmington, NC MSA
- Chattanooga: Chattanooga, TN-GA MSA
- Virginia Beach: Virginia Beach-Chesapeake-Norfolk, VA-NC MSA