In this report, the Eastern North Carolina (ENC) region consists of thirty-four counties to the east of interstate I-95. In 2017, the ENC region has a population of 1.89 million, offers 0.98 million jobs, and provides $75.7 billion total personal earnings. This report presents a snapshot of the economic conditions in the ENC region.

1. **Population**

In 2017, North Carolina has 10.27 million residents, a 1.1% increase from 2016, 18.4% of them live in the thirty-four ENC counties. Population in the east rises along with the state and nation but at a lower rate of 0.5% from 2016. Though the state population increases at a rate higher than the national average, ENC population has been growing slowly at rates lower than 0.5%.

Population declines in most counties in the ENC region at a rate as low as -2%. In contrast, urban counties around Raleigh, Charlotte, and Wilmington has population growth rates in the range of 1.57 to 3.6%.

2. **Employment**

Total employment has been rising since the financial crisis in 2008. In 2017, the state provides 5.92 million jobs and 16.6% of them are in the ENC region. ENC enjoys a consistent job growth though lower than the state and the nation. Total number of jobs grows 0.9% from 2016.
Unemployment rate is in a constant decline, at 4.5% in the state and 5.6% in ENC.

Though total employment has been rising in the region, the job growth varies greatly across counties in the state. Highest job growth rate is 4.11%. However, some counties in the northern area of ENC experience heavy decline in jobs at rates as low as -4.45%.

### 3. Personal Income

North Carolina has a total personal income of $454.3 billion in 2017, a 4.7% increase from 2016; ENC contributes a 16.7% share of this income. The growth in per capita personal income comes back from a stall in 2016 for the ENC region, state and nation, at similar rates just below 4%

Per capita personal income in ENC is not significantly lower than other counties in the state. Despite declines in population and employment, some counties in ENC enjoyed growth in per capita personal income at rates above 3.82%, and some above 4.66% in 2017.
4. Earnings by Industry

The government sector is the largest employer in the state of North Carolina, taking a 18.4% share in terms of total earnings. Government share is even larger in the ENC region. Share of government employment stays constantly high in the last decade. The second largest employers in the state are manufacturing and financial industries both with around 12% share of earnings, while health care and social assistance trails immediately behind with a 10.1% share.

The ENC region relies even more on government employment at a 33.5% share in earnings. The second and third largest employers are manufacturing (10.4%) and health care and social assistance (8.1%).
In 2017, Mining, quarry, and oil and gas extraction experienced the highest earning growth of 45.3% among all industry categories in the state. This is a huge contrast to the decline in 2008. The second largest earning growth is 19.3% happened in farming. Industries with 7 – 10% earnings growth are construction, financial, and transportation and warehousing.

In the ENC region, mining, quarry, and oil and gas extraction experienced 94.1% of growth in earnings in 2017, which even doubles the rate in the state. The second fastest growing industry in 2017 is farming at a rate of 25.7%.

Other industries with rates in the 9 – 12% range are forestry and fishing, construction, transportation and warehousing, and professional, scientific and technical services. Finance and insurance also has 8.1% of earnings growth.

2. ECU Regional Economist group includes Chun Kuang, Fan-chin Kung, and Meghan J. Millea.