

North Carolina County-Level Criminal Charging Data

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We have produced a variety of reports providing criminal justice stakeholders with key metrics to help them understand and evaluate their local criminal justice systems. Among other things, we have produced statewide and county level data on [use of citations by law enforcement officers](#), [use of summonses and warrants by magistrates](#), [imposition of different types of conditions of pretrial release](#), and [local jail occupancy numbers](#). In this report, we provide statewide and county level information on number of criminal charges, charged defendants, and criminal cases. As with our other reports, we make no judgment about the data presented; our goal simply is to provide data to inform stakeholders. Our full spreadsheet of results ([here](#)) has three main tabs showing data for (1) all offenses; (2) felonies; and (3) misdemeanors. Two additional tabs break down misdemeanor offenses into non-traffic misdemeanors and traffic misdemeanors. Each tab presents the following information at the state and county level:

- Total charged offenses
- Charged offenses per 100,000 population
- Total charged defendants
- Total charged cases
- Changes in these data points, from 2018 to 2019

As expected, the number of charges in the state's urban counties is higher than the number of charges in rural jurisdictions. To allow for more robust cross-county comparison, we added the data point of charges per 100,000 in population. Thus, while Mecklenburg County leads the state in total number of charges in 2019 (154,619), it is in the bottom 10 counties statewide with respect to charges per 100,000 population (see Table 1 below).

As with all of our spreadsheets, text columns can be filtered alphabetically and columns with numbers can be filtered from largest to smallest and vice versa. We provide statewide numbers at the top of every spreadsheet tab.

We have included below a few snippets from our spreadsheet, providing a peek at the new information available. After the tables, we provide detail on our data source, analysis, and continuing refinement of this information.

Table 1. Ten counties with the lowest rate of charging—all offenses, felonies and misdemeanors—per 100,000 population

All Charges, Defendants, and Cases							
Statewide	1,997,016	19,232	3.0%	1,665,574	3.2%	1,874,260	3.2%
County	2019 Total Charges	Charges Per 100k Population	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charges	2019 Charged Defendants	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charged Defendants	2019 Charged Cases	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charged Cases
Chowan	1,440	10,264	4.5%	1,236	19.3%	1,303	14.2%
Gates	1,233	10,654	21.0%	1,067	16.2%	1,120	14.6%
Durham	36,730	11,596	12.5%	30,121	13.3%	33,836	12.5%
Wake	128,859	11,797	-0.2%	110,204	-0.2%	121,687	0.0%
Hyde	619	11,836	-27.6%	545	-23.9%	590	-25.9%
Northampton	2,603	13,229	-13.2%	2,253	-8.5%	2,438	-11.1%
Mecklenburg	154,619	14,135	10.6%	128,924	9.9%	143,791	10.4%
Greene	3,066	14,592	-10.0%	2,734	-9.3%	2,951	-9.8%
Ashe	4,014	14,807	1.3%	3,273	0.4%	3,908	1.0%
Brunswick	20,363	14,891	-8.9%	16,719	-5.1%	18,844	-5.0%

Table 2. Ten counties with the lowest rate of charging—felonies only—per 100,000 population

Felony Charges, Defendants, and Cases							
Statewide	347,706	3,349	-1.0%	197,082	0.7%	258,946	-0.9%
County	2019 Total Charges	Charges Per 100k Population	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charges	2019 Charged Defendants	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charged Defendants	2019 Charged Cases	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charged Cases
Camden	108	1,008	22.7%	70	16.7%	81	22.7%
Watauga	973	1,739	-0.6%	567	4.4%	671	-4.1%
Perquimans	236	1,758	-1.7%	144	15.2%	158	9.7%
Hyde	94	1,797	-44.7%	51	-43.3%	74	-39.8%
Chowan	254	1,811	-37.3%	140	-30.7%	160	-35.2%
Wake	20,010	1,832	-3.2%	11,848	-1.1%	14,632	-2.5%
Orange	2,685	1,839	-10.1%	1,367	0.9%	1,856	-8.0%
Gates	214	1,849	92.8%	133	114.5%	144	75.6%
Cabarrus	3,989	1,887	-11.8%	1,967	-8.2%	2,272	-11.6%
Forsyth	7,175	1,893	3.1%	5,092	6.1%	6,041	5.9%

Table 3. Ten counties with the lowest rate of charging—misdemeanors only—per 100,000 population

All Misdemeanor Charges, Defendants, and Cases							
Statewide	1,649,310	15,884	3.9%	1,468,492	3.5%	1,615,314	3.9%
County	2019 Total Charges	Charges Per 100k Population	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charges	2019 Charged Defendants	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charged Defendants	2019 Charged Cases	2018 - 2019 Change in Total Charged Cases
Chowan	1,186	8,454	21.9%	1,096	31.4%	1,143	27.9%
Gates	1,019	8,805	12.2%	934	9.1%	976	9.1%
Durham	27,963	8,828	17.4%	25,075	16.6%	27,258	17.2%
Wake	108,849	9,965	0.4%	98,356	-0.1%	107,055	0.3%
Hyde	525	10,038	-23.4%	494	-21.1%	516	-23.3%
Northhampto	2,137	10,861	-3.9%	1,964	-6.4%	2,088	-4.2%
Brunswick	15,591	11,402	-6.7%	13,983	-5.2%	15,089	-5.8%
Mecklenburg	125,462	11,469	10.7%	113,213	10.2%	122,492	10.7%
Greene	2,453	11,674	-14.1%	2,325	-12.1%	2,418	-13.7%
Ashe	3,184	11,745	-4.4%	2,804	-0.7%	3,172	-3.9%

We produced our spreadsheet using data contained in the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts annual “Tally Report.” To create our spreadsheet, we had to address two issues with respect to Tally Report data. First, we had to address “Free Text” offenses listed in that report. Free Text offenses have no General Statutes citation associated with them and are not coded as a felony, misdemeanor or misdemeanor traffic offense. For certain Free Text offenses, we felt comfortable coding them with respect to offense type. For example, we felt comfortable coding “Homicide - Free Text” as a felony offense. In some situations, however, we were unable to categorize the offense, because it could include any number of felony or misdemeanor charges (e.g., “Assault - Free Text”). When this occurred, we coded the Free Text offense as Unknown and removed it from our analysis. The second issue we encountered was that certain charges listed in the Tally Report do not constitute substantive criminal offenses under North Carolina law. Examples include charge listings for “Probation Violation” and “Motions.” We coded these offenses as non-substantive and removed them from our analysis. For full transparency, we captured every decision made with respect to these two issues in tables included in the spreadsheet’s Read Me tab.

We are working on a report that breaks down charges, cases, and defendants with respect to whether the charged offense is violent or nonviolent. If you have ideas as to how we can best deliver this information, please let us know.