Western North Carolina

OUTDOOR ECONOMY
18-County Outdoor Industry and Labor Market Highlights

WNC Outdoor Industry employment growth exceeded the Nation’s -1% and State’s 5% from 2015-2020.

Jobs and Businesses
32 select industries pinpointed 1,100 businesses that sustained over 10,000 jobs in 2020.

10,000+ Jobs

9% Employment Growth 2015-2020

Employment Growth

There were 70 percent more jobs in this industry group in WNC compared to the national average, suggesting specialization in WNC.

1.7x National Average

Job Concentration

Gross Regional Product
GRP estimates the final market value of all goods and services produced by the industry group and was robust in 2020.

$773M GRP

$1.4B Sales

Sales
Sales or gross receipts of the industry group, both to other industries and consumers, were just over $1.4 billion.

Competitive Advantage

Broad Regional Relevance
Funded by a U.S. EDA grant, this study included the 18 counties of the Mountain Area, Southwestern, and High Country workforce development regions:

- Southwestern
- Mountain Area
- High Country

At least 73 Outdoor Gear Manufacturing Locations

The Outdoor Industry is enmeshed with many sectors of the economy. The study highlighted how numerous outdoor manufacturing organizations pivoted to support the healthcare system in response to COVID-19. For example, WNC gear manufacturers were recognized for producing tens of thousands of PPE products using advanced technologies.

Scan QR Code or Click the link to learn more about Outdoor Industry and Gear Production.

One scenario suggests that if the 10,000 pinpointed jobs related to outdoor industries were removed from WNC, an additional 4,700 indirect or supported jobs could also be impacted, as well as associated $586 million earnings for households.

Economic Impact of Removing Outdoor Economy Jobs from WNC

-14,667 Jobs
-$586M Earnings

Direct & Indirectly Supported Jobs

WNC has established a growing outdoor industry cluster with supply chain, educational programs, and a talented workforce that has distinguished the region.

Please note that the results of the analysis represent this discrete study and the analysis is not directly comparable to other studies due to differences in methodologies. Estimates are dependent on the industries selected, as well as the data sources. All data reflects quantities at a specific point in time and may be periodically updated. Data for 2020 was collected in 2021. Margins of error may apply.

For more information, please contact Riverbird Research, a division of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, at riverbirdresearch.com.