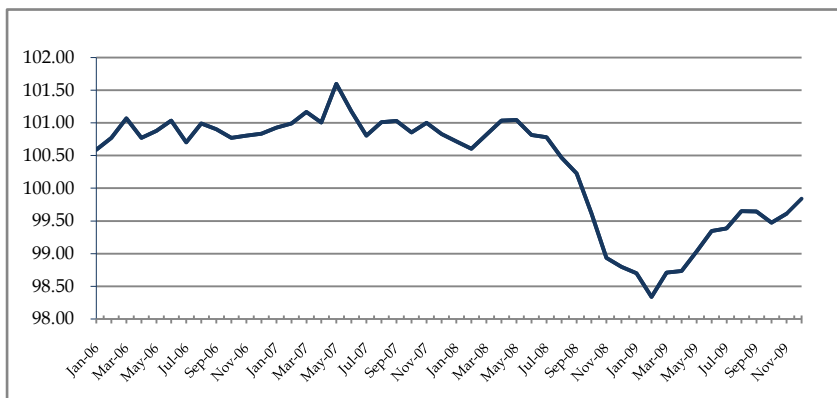


Strong Climb for Leading Index in December

Supported by one of the highest levels of average weekly manufacturing hours worked in the past ten years, the South Carolina Leading Index (SCLI) climbed rapidly in December, increasing 0.23 points (from an upwardly revised November figure) to a value of 99.84. The index, which provides a forward look at the state's economy for the upcoming three-to-six months, has now climbed 1.5 points from its nadir in February and is approaching 100 for the first time since September 2008.

The significant improvement in the SCLI was actually slowed by a modest uptick in the state's initial unemployment insurance claims. Meanwhile, increases in state building permits and the stock market helped to push the index higher.

-Rebecca M. Gunnlaugsson, Ph.D.



Source: South Carolina Department of Commerce

Online Job Postings Reach Annual High

According to the Conference Board's Help Wanted Online data series, South Carolina had 48,600 online job postings in December, the highest count in 2009. This level of online jobs marked an increase of more than 10 percent over November and nearly 18 percent over levels witnessed this past summer.

Of the jobs listed, 17,160 (35.3 percent) were classified by the index as Professional. Another 4,856 jobs (10.0 percent) were classified as Management positions. According to the Conference Board, 4,669 openings (9.6 percent) were defined as service-oriented. Not surprisingly, the category posting the fewest jobs was the Construction and Maintenance sector, with 2,161 listings. The Conference Board's index provides a comprehensive, unduplicated count of available positions in the state listed on online job boards and company Web sites.

The South Carolina Department of Commerce's Research Division is a highly-skilled, multidisciplinary group of professionals dedicated to the collection, analysis and dissemination of precise, timely data. The team of 13 individuals—including two Ph.D.s and seven Master's degrees—has experience ranging from economics and business to statistics, information technology, and more. The group integrates workforce and economic development research through the incorporation of federally-funded Labor Market Information directives and state-funded workforce and economic development initiatives. If you would like to receive Commerce's monthly Economic Outlook, e-mail EconomicOutlook@SCcommerce.com.

KEY S.C. INDICATORS

Income

+4%

Retail Sales

climbed \$380 million in December over November and were up \$24 million compared to December 2008.

South Carolina Department of Revenue

+2.8%

South Carolina Stock Index

increased 2.10 index points over last month to close at 78.16 the last day in December.

Bloomberg

Employment

-0.5%

Nonfarm Employment

fell by 9,900 jobs in December, led by seasonal declines in the leisure and hospitality sector.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

-0.3%

Labor Force

decreased by 3,082 people in December over the previous month.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

+0.3%

Unemployment Rate

rose 0.3 points in December to a seasonally-adjusted rate of 12.6 percent.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

+2.4%

Manufacturing Weekly Hours

increased one hour from an upwardly revised November figure to 43.4 hours.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

10.2%

Available Online Job Postings

climbed by 4,500 positions in December to 48,600 online job postings.

The Conference Board Help Wanted Online Index

Real Estate

+1.8%

Single-Family Home Sales Price

rose to \$140,500 in December. Closings fell 12.3 percent over November but increased 16.4 percent over December 2008.

South Carolina Association of Realtors

+4.5%

Building Permits

increased 4.5 percent over last month and 35.8 percent over last year.

U.S. Census

South Carolina Employment

Non-Seasonally Adjusted Wage and Salary Employment

Employment statewide fell in December by approximately 9,900 non-seasonally adjusted workers, with most of those losses occurring in the service-providing private sectors. The few sectors mitigating the month's decline by experiencing increases included the Trade, Transportation and Utilities sector, which grew by 1,300 jobs, or 0.4 percent, and the Information sector, which grew by 300 jobs, or 1.0 percent. Construction also saw a modest increase of 100 jobs, still more than 11 percent below last year's total. Government positions fell by 1,100 jobs, with a significant majority of those losses occurring in local government positions, most likely educational support personnel released at the end of the semester.

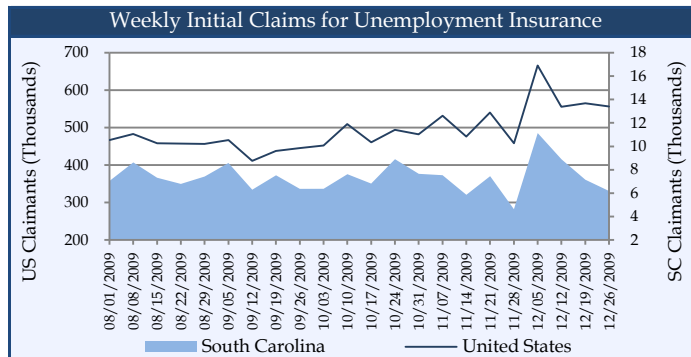
Industry Sector	December 2009	Previous Month	Previous Year	% Change Month Ago	% Change Year Ago
Goods Producing	312,300	312,900	346,300	-0.19	-9.82
Natural Resources and Mining	4,200	4,100	4,200	2.44	0.00
Construction	96,200	96,100	108,500	0.10	-11.34
Construction of Buildings	23,400	23,600	27,900	-0.85	-16.13
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	13,400	13,500	13,900	-0.74	-3.60
Specialty Trade Contractors	59,400	59,000	66,700	0.68	-10.94
Manufacturing	211,900	212,700	233,600	-0.38	-9.29
Durable Goods	116,000	116,300	131,400	-0.26	-11.72
Nondurable Goods	95,900	96,400	102,200	-0.52	-6.16
Service Providing	1,535,200	1,544,500	1,539,300	-0.60	-0.27
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	358,800	357,500	368,500	0.36	-2.63
Wholesale Trade	67,300	67,700	69,500	-0.59	-3.17
Retail Trade	228,400	227,700	234,600	0.31	-2.64
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	63,100	62,100	64,400	1.61	-2.02
Information	30,100	29,800	29,400	1.01	2.38
Finance	101,400	101,700	105,300	-0.29	-3.70
Finance and Insurance	73,500	73,700	76,200	-0.27	-3.54
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	27,900	28,000	29,100	-0.36	-4.12
Professional and Business Services	224,000	228,000	210,200	-1.75	6.57
Professional, Scientific and Technical	81,900	81,200	73,400	0.86	11.58
Management of Companies and Enterprises	15,400	15,400	15,600	0.00	-1.28
Administrative Support and Waste Management	126,700	131,400	121,200	-3.58	4.54
Educational and Health Services	211,400	211,200	209,000	0.09	1.15
Leisure and Hospitality	189,200	194,400	196,600	-2.67	-3.76
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	25,300	25,900	26,000	-2.32	-2.69
Accommodation and Food Services	163,900	168,500	170,600	-2.73	-3.93
Other Services	71,200	71,700	70,100	-0.70	1.57
Total Private	1,498,400	1,507,200	1,535,400	-0.58	-2.41
Government	349,100	350,200	350,200	-0.31	-0.31
Federal Government	32,700	32,600	30,800	0.31	6.17
State Government	99,900	100,100	102,100	-0.20	-2.15
Local Government	216,500	217,500	217,300	-0.46	-0.37
Total Nonfarm	1,847,500	1,857,400	1,885,600	-0.53	-2.02

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Initial UI Claims Spike, Then Fade in December

Initial claims for Unemployment Insurance (UI) spiked to their highest weekly total in five months to start December, only to return to their recent downward trend for the rest of the month. While not returning to the two-year low initial claims experienced in November, they did fall to 6,174 claims in the last week of the year. This value was the third-lowest weekly total in 2009. Overall, average weekly initial claim volume in December was 39 percent below December 2008 levels.

Nationally, claims began the month by following a similar pattern. Toward the end of the month, however, national initial claims maintained a static level, rather than the continued decline as in South Carolina.



Source: U.S. Department of Labor



South Carolina Real Estate

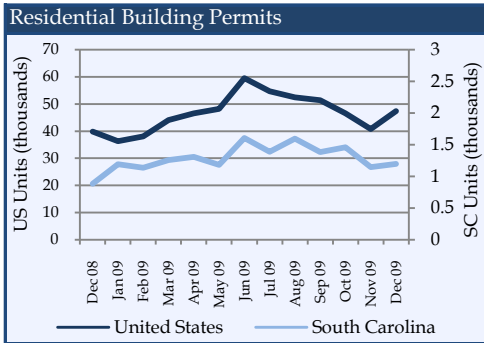
For the third-straight month, residential home sales outperformed the same month from the previous year, helping to narrow, but not eliminate, the overall decline in home sales for the year. The fourth-quarter sales, which were 28.3 percent ahead of the fourth quarter of 2008, reduced the annual sales decrease for 2009 to 8.5 percent. South Carolina home sales had entered the final three months of 2009 17.6 percent behind last year's sales totals. Median sales price for December remained stable, while annual sales price was off

8.4 percent from 2008. The number of building permits mirrored sales, with the month's permits exceeding December 2008 figures, but with annual figures remaining behind 2008 totals. The valuation of these permits followed the same trend.

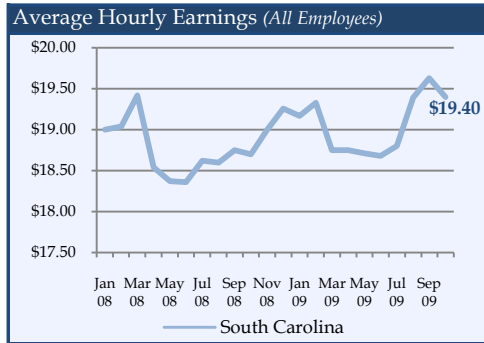
	Month	Current	Previous Year	% Change Year Ago	2009 YTD	2008 YTD	% Change Year Ago
Closings	December	3,504	3,010	16.4%	42,690	46,635	-8.5%
Median Sales Price*	December	140.5	139.5	0.7%	141.0	154.0	-8.4%
Foreclosures	December	2,683	1,813	48.0%	30,327	16,136	87.9%
Residential Building Permits-Total	December	1,198	882	35.8%	15,843	25,273	-37.3%
Residential Building Permits-Valuation*	December	207,709	147,958	40.4%	2,610,790	4,077,458	-36.0%

* Thousands of US dollars. Source: S.C. Association of Realtors, RealtyTrac, U.S. Census

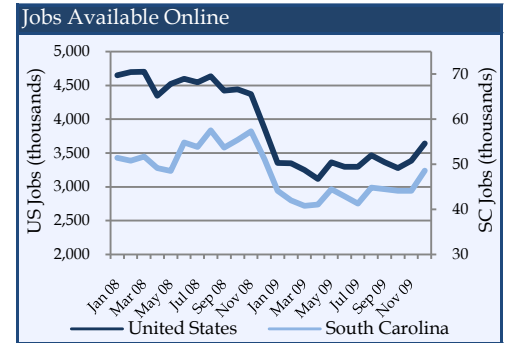
Business Activity



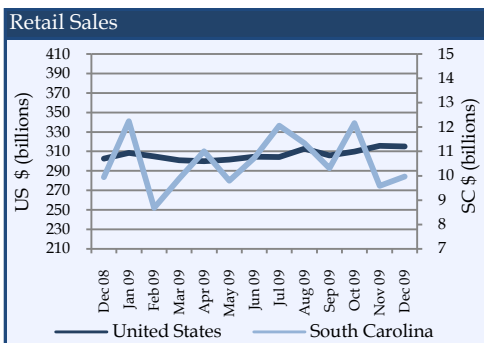
Source: U.S. Census



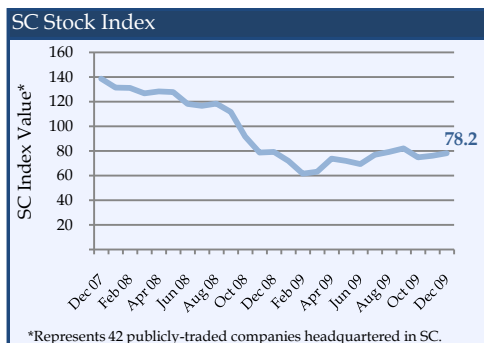
Source: U.S. Department of Labor



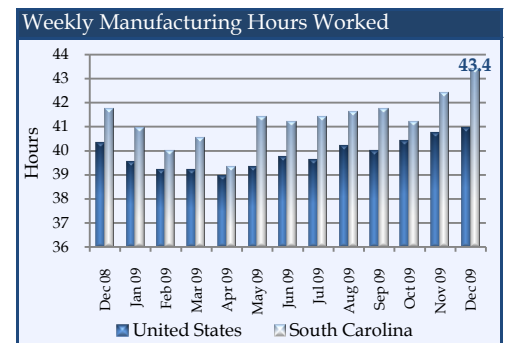
Source: The Conference Board Help Wanted Online Index



Source: South Carolina Department of Revenue

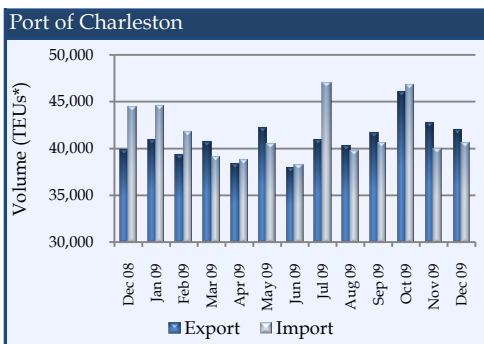


Source: Bloomberg

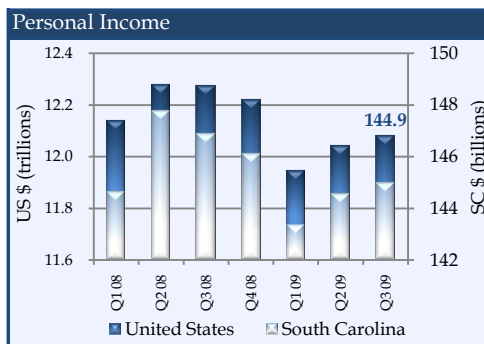


Source: U.S. Department of Labor

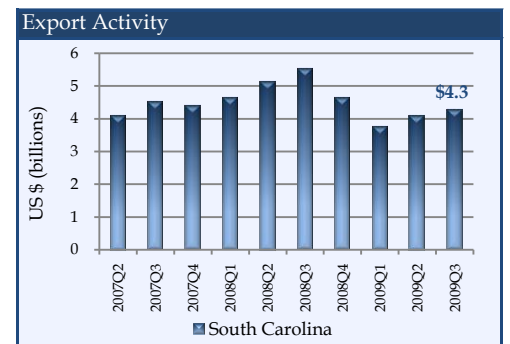
Income and Output



*Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units. Source: SC Ports Authority



Source: U.S. Census



Source: Foreign Trade Division, U.S. Census

South Carolina Regional Update

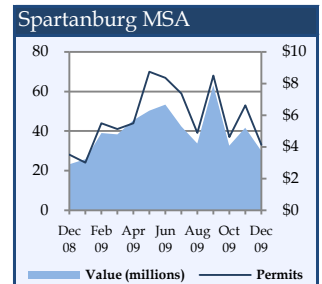
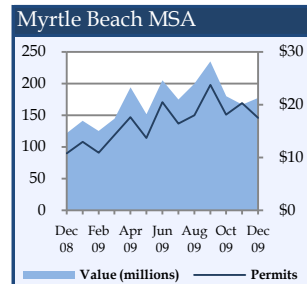
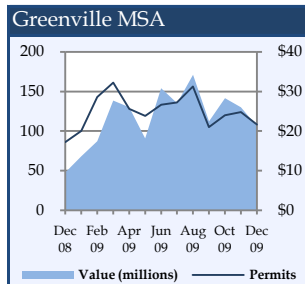
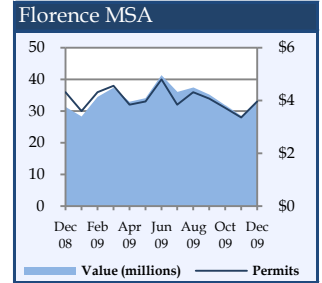
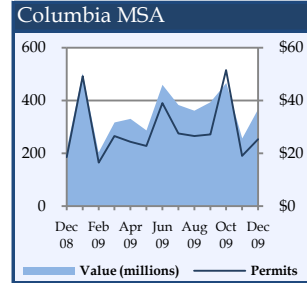
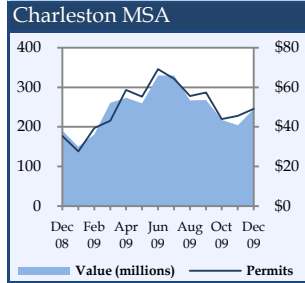
The South Carolina Regional Update provides a snapshot of the most recent economic figures for the six largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) in the state. Building permits rose in Charleston, Columbia and Florence while home sales grew over their December 2008 levels in all six MSAs.

Home Sales

MSA	Indicator	Dec 08	Dec 09
Charleston	Sales Volume	476	618
	Median Price (000's)	\$192	\$196
Columbia	Sales Volume	507	542
	Median Price (000's)	\$139	\$143
Florence	Sales Volume	109	121
	Median Price (000's)	\$99	\$115
Greenville	Sales Volume	491	495
	Median Price (000's)	\$139	\$140
Myrtle Beach	Sales Volume	378	532
	Median Price (000's)	\$160	\$149
Spartanburg	Sales Volume	207	215
	Median Price (000's)	\$113	\$111
South Carolina	Sales Volume	3,010	3,504
	Median Price (000's)	\$139.5	\$140.5

Source: S.C. Association of Realtors

Building Permits



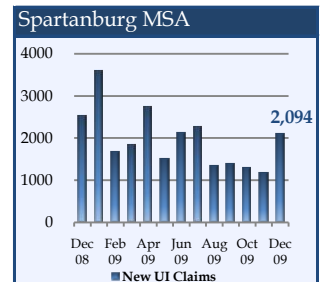
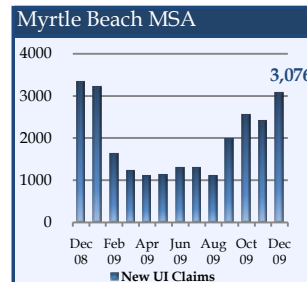
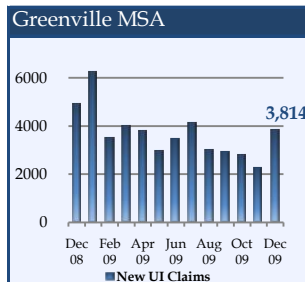
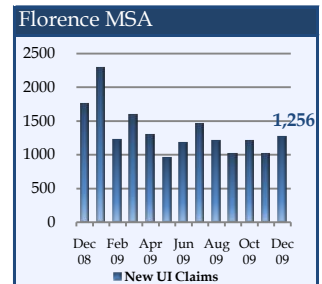
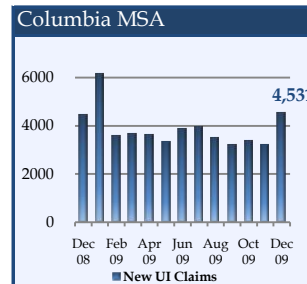
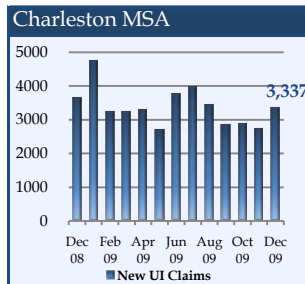
Source: U.S. Census

Employment

MSA	Indicator	Nov 09	Dec 09
Charleston	Employment (000's)	289.7	286.1
	Unemployment Rate	9.9	10.2
Columbia	Employment (000's)	341.9	335.9
	Unemployment Rate	9.5	9.8
Florence	Employment (000's)	85.6	84.1
	Unemployment Rate	12.3	12.3
Greenville	Employment (000's)	285.9	283.0
	Unemployment Rate	10.7	10.7
Myrtle Beach	Employment (000's)	113.2	107.3
	Unemployment Rate	12.1	14.8
Spartanburg	Employment (000's)	122.3	120.9
	Unemployment Rate	12.4	12.7
South Carolina	Employment (000's)	1,907.4	1,877.6
	Unemployment Rate	12.3	12.6

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (MSA figures not seasonally adjusted)

Unemployment Insurance Claims



Source: SCDOC analysis of SCESC data

Ten Fastest-Growing States, 2000-2009

- | | | | |
|------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| 1. Nevada | 30.96% | 6. Texas | 18.32% |
| 2. Arizona | 27.66% | 7. North Carolina | 16.11% |
| 3. Utah | 24.07% | 8. Colorado | 16.10% |
| 4. Georgia | 19.43% | 9. Florida | 15.52% |
| 5. Idaho | 18.95% | 10. South Carolina | 13.36% |

Source: Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau