

As cheap foreign imports have flooded the market, the number of furniture manufacturing jobs in western North Carolina has dropped by nearly two-thirds this decade.

State figures say the number of furniture manufacturing jobs in the western part of the state fell from 7,400 in 2000 to under 2,500 in the third quarter of 2006.

The jobs that North Carolina has lost will not be coming back, according to experts, who say there will still be a market for handmade and custom items. The numbers in Western North Carolina are significantly worse than the state as a whole, where the amount of furniture manufacturing workers has fallen by almost a third since the beginning of the decade.