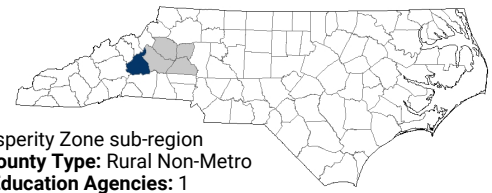


# McDowell County

NC goal: 2 million by 2030  
2020 County Attainment Profile



Updated: Aug 04 2021

## INTRODUCTION

From birth to career, there are many opportunities to develop strategies and interventions to increase attainment and improve workforce alignment. Below are some key areas and indicators that highlight where interventions may be possible to improve overall educational attainment outcomes.

## COUNTY OVERVIEW


McDowell County is in the **Hickory** Prosperity Zone sub-region. It's one of 50 rural non-metro counties in NC.

Overall, 4% of 25-44-year-olds in McDowell County have earned a master's degree or higher as their highest degree; 13% have a bachelor's degree; 15% have an associate degree; 26% have some college, no degree; 29% have a high school diploma; and 13% have less than a high school diploma.

<b>2018 Population</b>	46,373
<b>2030 Population</b>	49,474
<b>K-12 Students (2019)</b>	
Traditional Schools	5,871
Charter/Private/Home	1,232
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$43,972
<b>Child Poverty Rate</b>	21%
<b>Households with Broadband</b>	70%

## Building the Foundation: Pre-K to 8

High-quality early learning and strong academic progress in early years helps prepare children for future success.

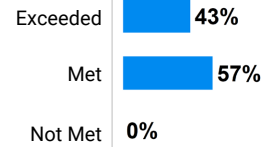
 McDowell County has 14 public schools with performance grades. Of these schools, none were classified as low performing in 2019.

## How students in McDowell County traditional public schools are currently doing:

To meet state goals, McDowell County needs:

- **McDowell County has met the goal for eligible 4-year-olds** enrolled in NC Pre-K program (goal: 75% vs. 76%).
- **839 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73% vs. 44%).
- **1,439 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86% vs. 36%).

## Percent of McDowell County schools by academic growth status, 2019



## Ready for College & Career

High school completion is a crucial step on the pathway to postsecondary success or the beginnings of a career. Activities that prepare students to navigate the transition to postsecondary include gaining experience in college-level coursework and applying for financial assistance.

To meet state goals, McDowell County needs:

- **56 more 9th graders** to graduate within four years (goal: 95% vs. 83%).
- **131 more seniors** to complete the FAFSA (goal: 80% vs. 48%).
- **292 more students** to attend school regularly (goal: 11% chronic absenteeism vs. 16%).



**174 students** took at least one AP course (10%) versus 9% of peer counties.




**505 students** participated in Career & College Promise programs (29%) versus 22% of peer counties.

Students in McDowell County completed **253 Career & Technical Education concentrations** in 2019. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Manufacturing; Arts, Audio/Video Technology, & Communications; and Architecture and Construction.

## Postsecondary Access and Success

These metrics capture student progression and educational attainment from high school graduation to postsecondary completion. They indicate relative strengths and weaknesses of McDowell County at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline.

 McDowell County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 326:1.

Among McDowell County high school graduates:


- **48% of graduates** enroll in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 57% of peer counties.
- **74% of students** who enroll persist to their second year versus 73% of peer counties.
- **50% of students** who enroll earn a degree or credential within 6 years versus 49% of peer counties.

## In your Prosperity Zone sub-region, 2018-19:

<b>300</b>	individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program.
<b>3,422</b>	Basic Skills enrollments at NC community colleges.
<b>22,503</b>	Continuing Education enrollments at NC community colleges.

## Labor Market Outcomes

Lack of technical skills and lack of education are among the primary reasons why NC employers struggle to fill vacancies. These metrics capture labor market outcomes among recent graduates, the alignment between postsecondary degree production and labor market demand, and future job demands.

 7.9% of teens ages 16-19 are not working and not in school versus 8.9% of peer counties.

In your Prosperity Zone sub-region:

Public postsecondary institutions graduate **2,073 students per year**. After 5 years, 82% of 2013 graduates were employed in NC, earning an annual average wage of \$33,373.

64% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs. The top gaps are: **Transportation, Distribution & Logistics** (below bachelor's); **Health Science** (above and below bachelor's); and **Business Management & Administration** (bachelor's).

There are **188,511 job openings** projected between 2017-2026. The top 3 in demand jobs with median wages of \$50,000 or more are: 1) **Registered Nurses**; 2) **First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers**; 3) **Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products**.

## Opportunities for Growth

Compared to rural non-metro counties and the state, these three areas represent the biggest opportunities for McDowell County to improve future attainment outcomes.



### Transition to Postsecondary

48% of McDowell County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the rural non-metro county average of 57%.



### FAFSA Completion

48% of McDowell County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the rural non-metro county average of 55%.



### High School Graduation

83% of McDowell County 9th graders complete high school in 4 years or less, below the rural non-metro county average of 86%.

Largest postsecondary institutions in your Prosperity Zone sub-region		
Institution Name	Undergraduate Enrollments 2017-18	Graduate or Transfer in 8 Years
<b>Total Enrollments</b>	<b>16,315</b>	<b>52%</b>
Catawba Valley Community College	6,125	62%
Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute	4,636	53%
Western Piedmont Community College	2,306	36%
Lenoir-Rhyne University	1,830	70%
McDowell Technical Community College	1,418	44%

**Notes:**

Enrollments reflect degree- or credential-seeking undergraduate enrollments. The graduate or transfer rate is drawn from IPEDS and represents the share of students who either graduate with a degree or credential from the institution or transfer to another institution within 8 years. The 8-year outcome is the only measure that includes information on transfer out. Detailed data guidance is provided at <http://go.unc.edu/countydata>

**Local Cross-Sector Promising Practice: McDowell Strategic Employment Plan Initiative (SEPI)**

The McDowell Economic Development Association and the Region C Workforce Development Board studied the employment needs of McDowell County to develop a strategic regional plan.




We identified this example of an emerging cross-sector promising practice in partnership with local leaders. If you have additional examples you'd like to share with myFutureNC, please respond to this [short survey](#).

For more information about each indicator, including data sources and methodology, visit:

[dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/)




**ABOUT CAROLINA DEMOGRAPHY**

Located within the Carolina Population Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, we use data and other available research to help you put a face or a story on the population-level changes facing your community. Our analysts provide a full array of demographic data and research services to inform decision making, evaluation, and policy across North Carolina, where we serve organizations and people in all 100 counties.

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MyFutureNC is a statewide nonprofit organization focused on educational attainment and is the result of cross-sector collaboration between North Carolina leaders in education, business, and government. Our mission is to prepare North Carolina for the future by empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and ensuring our economic viability in a global economy.

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