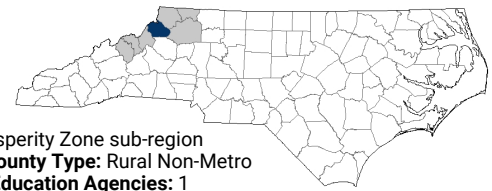


# Watauga County

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

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

Overall, 15% of 25-44-year-olds in Watauga County have earned a master's degree or higher as their highest degree; 30% have a bachelor's degree; 10% have an associate degree; 24% have some college, no degree; 15% have a high school diploma; and 7% have less than a high school diploma.

<b>2018 Population</b>	57,067
<b>2030 Population</b>	67,043
<b>K-12 Students (2019)</b>	
Traditional Schools	4,549
Charter/Private/Home	1,125
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$48,489
<b>Child Poverty Rate</b>	15%
<b>Households with Broadband</b>	81%

## Building the Foundation: Pre-K to 8

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

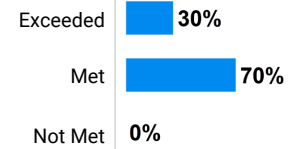
Watauga County has 10 public schools with performance grades. Of these schools, none were classified as low performing in 2019.

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

To meet state goals, Watauga County needs:

- **4 more eligible 4-year-olds** enrolled in NC Pre-K program (goal: 75% vs. 72%).
- **317 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73% vs. 58%).
- **742 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86% vs. 52%).

## Percent of Watauga 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, Watauga County needs:

- **16 more 9th graders** to graduate within four years (goal: 95% vs. 90%).
- **68 more seniors** to complete the FAFSA (goal: 80% vs. 58%).
- **4 more students** to attend school regularly (goal: 11% chronic absenteeism vs. 11%).



**289 students** took at least one AP course (21%) versus 9% of peer counties.



**279 students** participated in Career & College Promise programs (20%) versus 22% of peer counties.

Students in Watauga County completed **158 Career & Technical Education concentrations** in 2019. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Human Services; Hospitality & Tourism; and Manufacturing.

## Postsecondary Access and Success

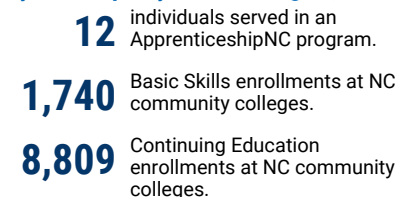
These metrics capture student progression and educational attainment from high school graduation to postsecondary completion. They indicate relative strengths and weaknesses of Watauga County at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline.

Watauga County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 303:1.

Among Watauga County high school graduates:

- **60% of graduates** enroll in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 57% of peer counties.
- **85% of students** who enroll persist to their second year versus 73% of peer counties.
- **67% 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:



## 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.

2% 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 **5,225 students per year**. After 5 years, 70% of 2013 graduates were employed in NC, earning an annual average wage of \$41,744.

72% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs. The top gap is: **Transportation, Distribution & Logistics** (below bachelor's).

There are **84,705 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) **General and Operations Managers**; 3) **First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers**.

## Opportunities for Growth

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



### CCP Enrollment

20% of Watauga County high school students participated in the Career & College Promise program programs, below the rural non-metro county average of 22%.



### FAFSA Completion

58% of Watauga County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the state average of 64%.



### Transition to Postsecondary

60% of Watauga County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the state average of 61%.

## 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>28,661</b>	<b>75%</b>
Appalachian State University	18,135	91%
Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute	4,636	53%
Wilkes Community College	3,416	54%
Mayland Community College	1,455	55%
Lees-McRae College	1,019	66%

**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: Appalachian GEAR UP Partnership

The Appalachian GEAR UP Partnership grant serves approximately 15,000 students from 11 school districts in the following Western North Carolina counties: Alleghany, Ashe, Burke, Clay, Graham, Madison, Rutherford, Swain, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey. Appalachian GEAR UP strives to create capacity in the districts that changes mindsets around college access and college goingness in a sustainable way.

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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### ABOUT MYFUTURENC

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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