

# Buncombe County

NC goal: 2 million by 2030

Overview of postsecondary attainment pipeline



Sub-prosperity zone  
Peer county: suburban

## 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.

### Building the Foundation: Pre-K to 8

High-quality early learning helps prepare children for future success while academic progress in early school years often predicts later academic challenges.

Buncombe County has 50 public schools with performance grades. Of these schools, 4 or 8% were classified as low performing in 2019.

## COUNTY OVERVIEW

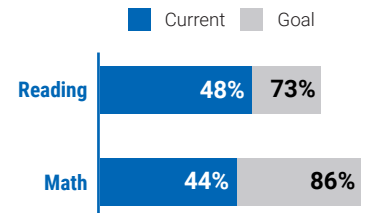
Buncombe County is in the Asheville sub-prosperity zone. It's one of 16 suburban counties in NC. Overall, 50% of 25-44-year-olds in Buncombe County have earned an associate degree or higher, 21% have some college, no degree, and 28% have a high school diploma or less.

2018 Population	261,065
2030 Projected Population	296,961
<b>K-13 Students (2019)</b>	
Traditional Schools	27,741
Charter/Private/Home	10,541
Median Household Income	\$53,960

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

To meet state goals, Buncombe County needs:

- **473 more eligible 4-year-olds** enrolled in NC Pre-K program (goal: 75% enrollment).
- **3,154 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73%).
- **5,357 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86%).



### Ready for Postsecondary

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, Buncombe County needs:

- **181 more 9th graders** to graduate within four years (goal: 95%).
- **454 more seniors** to complete the FAFSA (goal: 80%).
- **767 more students** to attend school regularly (goal: 11% chronic absenteeism).



**1,619 students** took at least one AP exam.



**1,955 students** participated in NC Community College dual enrollment programs.

### 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 Buncombe County at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline.

Among Buncombe County high school graduates:

- **58%** enroll in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 62% of peer counties.
- **79% of students** who enroll persist to their second year versus 78% of peer counties.
- **58% of students** who enroll earn a degree or credential within 6 years versus 54% of peer counties.

### Largest Postsecondary Institutions in Your Sub-Prosperity Zone, 2018

Rank	School Name	Total Enrollments	Graduate or Transfer in 8 Years
	All Institutions	24,199	65%
1	Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	10,492	53%
2	University of North Carolina at Asheville	4,397	89%
3	Blue Ridge Community College	2,812	48%

Note: Detailed data guidance is provided at <http://go.unc.edu/countydata>

### 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.

In your sub-prosperity zone:

Public postsecondary institutions graduate roughly **2,800 students per year**. After 5 years, 69% of 2013 graduates were employed in NC, earning an annual average wage of \$33,116.

**71%** of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs. The top gaps are: **Health Science** (all levels); **Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics** (below bachelor's); and **Finance** (bachelor's).

There are **255,000 job openings** projected in the next 10 years. The top 3 in demand jobs with average wages of \$50,000 or more are: 1) **Registered Nurses**; 2) **General and Operations Managers**; 3) **Sales Representatives, Services, All Other**.

## HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES

Compared to suburban counties, these three areas represent the biggest opportunities for Buncombe County to improve future attainment outcomes.



### Pre-K Enrollments

35% of Buncombe County eligible 4-year-olds are currently enrolled in NC Pre-K, below the suburban county average of 44%.



### Transition to Postsecondary

58% of Buncombe County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the suburban county average (62%).



### High School Graduation

87% of Buncombe County 9th graders complete high school in four years, below the suburban county average (88%).

# WE NEED TO CLOSE THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT GAP IN NORTH CAROLINA.






**That starts with an ambitious goal: ensuring that by 2030,  
2 million North Carolinians ages 25-44 have a high-quality  
postsecondary degree or credential.**

**For more information about each indicator,  
including data sources and methodology, visit  
[dashboard.myfuturenc.org](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org)**




## **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.

 [ncdemography.org](https://ncdemography.org)  
 [demography@unc.edu](mailto:demography@unc.edu)  
 [@ncdemography](https://twitter.com/ncdemography)

## **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.

 [myfuturenc.org](https://myfuturenc.org)  
 [facebook.com/myfuturenc](https://facebook.com/myfuturenc)  
 [@myFutureNC](https://twitter.com/myFutureNC)