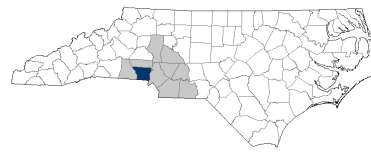


# Gaston County



Charlotte  
Prosperity Zone Sub-Region  
Peer County Type: Suburban  
Local Education Agencies: 1  
Charter Schools: 4

**2030 NC Degree Attainment Goal: 2 million (67%)**  
**2030 Proposed Gaston County Attainment Goal: 35,691 (58%)**

## Population Spotlight

2010 Census: 206,086  
2020 Census: 227,943  
Change: 21,857

## Growth Rate

**10.6%** vs. **9.5%**  
County State

**\$60,622**  
Median Household Income (2020)

**17.4%**  
Child Poverty Rate (2020)

**88%**  
Households with Broadband (2020)

**66%**  
Home Owners (2020)

**78%**  
Voter Registration Rate (2021)

**5.2%**  
Unemployment Rate (2021)

## Educational Attainment

Gaston County residents ages 25-44, 2021

**No Degree**  
**51.9%**  
30,247

**Have Degree or Credential**  
**48.1%**  
28,021

Less than high school | High school graduate (including GED) | Some college, no credential | Short-term credential | Associate degree | Bachelor's degree | Graduate or professional degree



Note: Numbers may add to more than 100% due to rounding

## Top Opportunities for Growth

These three areas represent the biggest opportunities for Gaston County to improve future attainment outcomes.



### Chronic Absenteeism

41% of Gaston County students are chronically absent from school, above the suburban county average of 26%.



### Transition to Postsecondary

46% of Gaston County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the suburban county average of 55%.

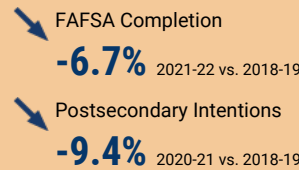
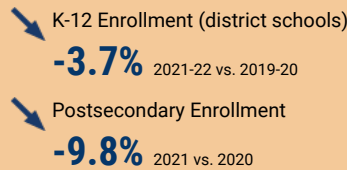


### FAFSA Completion

52% of Gaston County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the suburban county average of 57%.

## Impact of Covid-19 on Education Pipeline

Covid-19 has affected critical transition points along the education continuum.



## Data Disruptions

- College-and-Career-Ready in Reading
- College-and-Career-Ready in Math
- Chronic Absenteeism



[ncdemography.org](http://ncdemography.org)

## ACADEMIC READINESS

### How students in Gaston County traditional schools are currently doing:

To meet state goals, each year Gaston County needs:

- 67% of eligible 4-year-olds enrolled in NC Pre-K program; 110 more needed to meet state goal of 75%. 2022
- 25% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading; 6,719 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. 2022
- 29% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math; 7,948 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. 2022
- 87% of 9th graders graduate within four years; 207 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. 2021
- 41% of students are chronically absent from school; 8,730 less needed to meet state goal of 11%. 2021

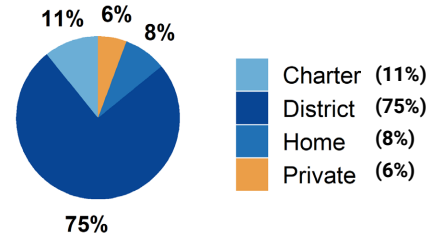


Gaston County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 307:1 versus 336:1 in peer counties. 2021

### School Choice

39,559 total students were enrolled in K-12 in Gaston County in the 2021-22 school year.

Note: This profile focuses on outcomes of students enrolled in district schools.



### Career and College Preparation

**1,282 high school students** took at least one AP course (14%) versus 15% in peer counties (2021).

**618 graduates** participated in Career & College Promise programs (29%) versus 33% in peer counties (2021).

Students in Gaston County completed **1,147 Career & Technical Education concentrations** in 2021. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Human Services; Health Science; and Arts, Audio/Video Technology, & Communications.

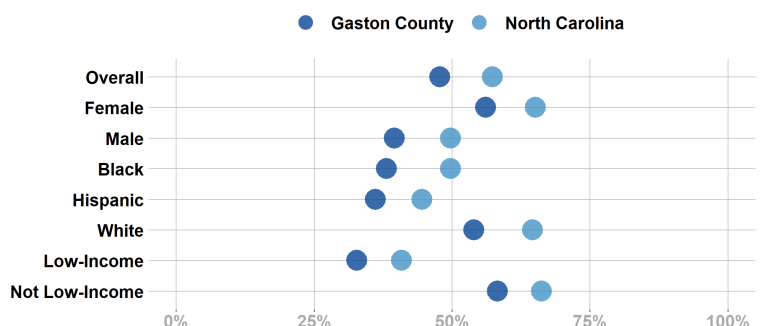
## COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

- 52% of seniors completed the FAFSA in 2022; 575 more need to complete in 2022 to meet state goal of 80%. 2022 <https://www.myfuturenc.org/ourwork/first-in-fafsa/>
- 67% of graduates reported intentions to enroll in a postsecondary institution versus 75% in peer counties. 2021
- 46% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 55% in peer counties. 2021



56% of Gaston County students have parents with no college degree (either 2- or 4-year) versus 49% in peer counties.

### Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Gaston County, 2021



Note: Outcomes for demographic groups with fewer than 10 students are not displayed.

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

## Success of Gaston County High School Graduates

### Top destinations of graduates, 2016-2020

- **41%** of college-goers attended a **public 4-year college**
  - **16%** of college-goers attended a **private 4-year college**
  - **42%** of college-goers attended a **public 2-year college**
  - **<5%** of college-goers attended a **private 2-year college**
  - **91%** of college-goers attended an **in-state college**
- **78%** of students who enroll **persist to their second year** versus 77% in peer counties. 2021
  - **56%** of students who enroll **earn a degree or credential** within 6 years versus 60% in peer counties. 2021

## Adult Learners

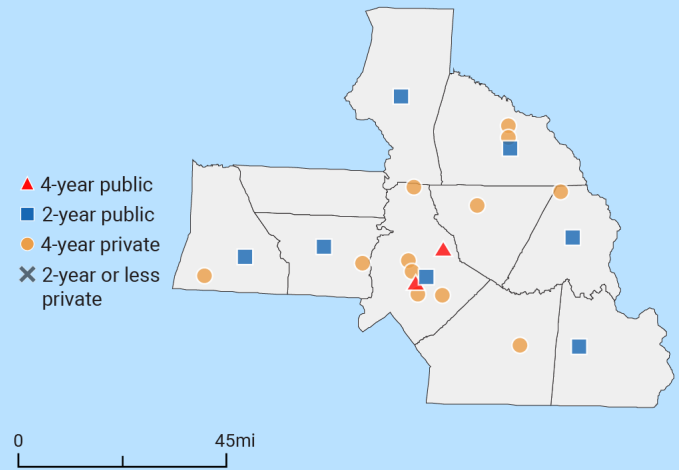
### Gaston County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, 2021

- 344** Basic Skills
- 2,613** Continuing Education
- 4,117** Curriculum



14% of Gaston County residents have **student loan debt**; 10% of debt holders had **student loans in default**. 2020

## Postsecondary assets in Charlotte Prosperity Zone sub-region



### Degree Credentials Awarded, 2021

**6,673** certificate | **6,036** associate | **9,688** bachelor's

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

## In your Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

**82.2%**

of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are **aligned with labor market needs**.

### Top areas of misalignment:

- Business Management & Administration** (bachelor's)
- Information Technology** (bachelor's)
- Finance** (bachelor's)

**4,230** Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2020

### UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

- 12,495** graduates in 2020
- 74%** of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
- \$45,387** annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs)

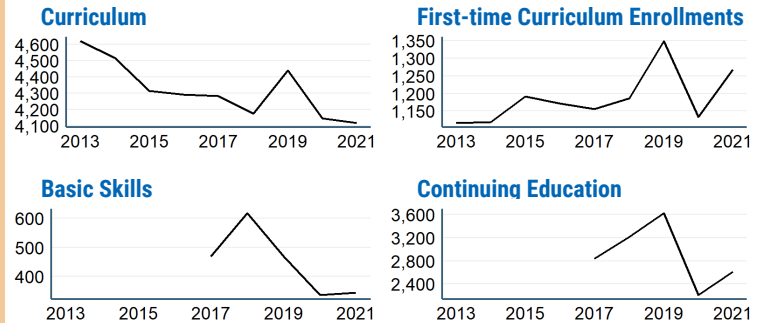
### In 2021 your Workforce Development Board served:

- 4,821** in Basic Services
- 2,215** in Career Services
- 90** in Education Services

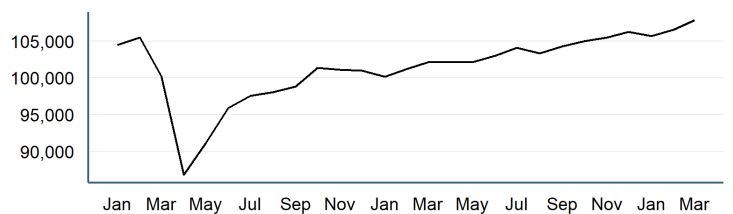


**14.0%** of young adults ages 16-24 in Gaston County were **not working and not in school** versus **11.2%** in peer counties. 2019

## Impact of Covid-19 on NC Community College Enrollment



## Number of Gaston County residents employed, January 2020 to March 2022



## Promising Attainment Practices

The new **Promising Attainment Practices Database** is a curated, searchable, and filterable collection of about 250 county, region, and state-level initiatives and programs that directly address various components of the state's attainment challenge. The Database allows local and regional initiative leaders and other stakeholders to identify groups across the state who are developing or operating initiatives designed to boost attainment.

Follow link to discover how Gaston County has been meeting local needs:

[https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt\\_search=Gaston](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Gaston)

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/)