

Watauga County

2030 NC Degree Attainment Goal: 2 million (67%)
2030 Proposed Watauga County Attainment Goal: 13,321 (79%)



Boone-Wilkesboro
 Prosperity Zone Sub-Region
Peer County Type: Rural Non-Metro
Local Education Agencies: 1
Charter Schools: 1

Population Spotlight

2010 Census: 51,079
 2020 Census: 54,086
 Change: 3,007

Growth Rate

5.9% County vs. **9.5%** State

\$54,004
 Median Household Income (2020)

11.7%
 Child Poverty Rate (2020)

89%
 Households with Broadband (2020)

62%
 Home Owners (2020)

73%
 Voter Registration Rate (2021)

3.7%
 Unemployment Rate (2021)

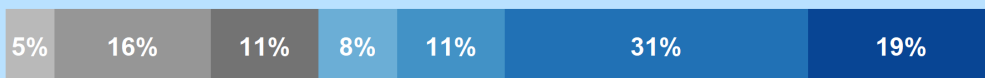
Educational Attainment

Watauga County residents ages 25-44, 2021

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

No Degree
32.2%
 3,492

Have Degree or Credential
67.8%
 7,340



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

Top Opportunities for Growth

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



Math Performance

45% of Watauga County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Math, below the state goal of 86%.



Reading Performance

42% of Watauga County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Reading, below the state goal of 73%.

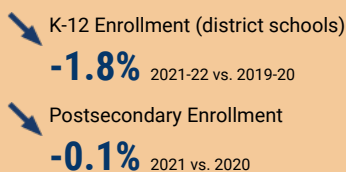


FAFSA Completion

65% of Watauga County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the state goal of 80%.

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

ACADEMIC READINESS

How students in Watauga County traditional schools are currently doing:

To meet state goals, each year Watauga County needs:

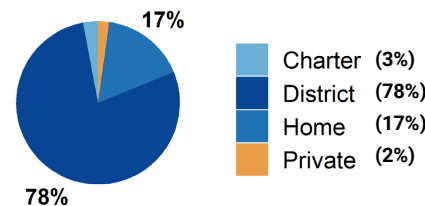
- Watauga County has met the goal for **Pre-K enrollment**. (Goal: **75%**). 2022
- 42%** of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in **reading**; 657 more needed to meet state goal of **73%**. 2022
- 45%** of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in **math**; 869 more needed to meet state goal of **86%**. 2022
- 92%** of 9th graders **graduate within four years**; 11 more needed to meet state goal of **95%**. 2021
- Watauga County has met the goal for **chronic absenteeism**. (Goal: **11%**). 2021

Watauga County has a **student-to-school counselor ratio** of 317:1 versus 318:1 in peer counties. 2021

School Choice

5,830 total students were enrolled in K-12 in Watauga County in the 2021-22 school year.

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



Career and College Preparation

278 high school students took at least one **AP course** (**19%**) versus **7%** in peer counties (2021).

202 graduates participated in **Career & College Promise programs** (**58%**) versus **49%** in peer counties (2021).

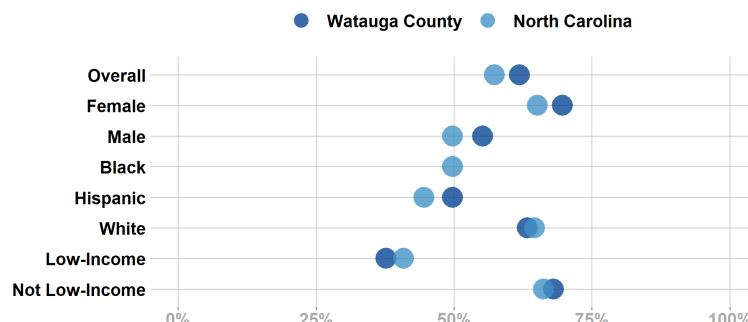
Students in Watauga County completed **167 Career & Technical Education concentrations** in 2021. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Human Services; Architecture and Construction; and Hospitality & Tourism.

COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

- 65%** of seniors **completed the FAFSA** in 2022; 50 more need to complete in 2022 to meet state goal of **80%**. 2022
<https://www.myfuturenc.org/ourwork/first-in-fafsa/>
- 82%** of graduates reported **intentions to enroll** in a postsecondary institution versus 69% in peer counties. 2021
- 60%** of graduates **enrolled in a postsecondary institution** within 12 months versus 50% in peer counties. 2021

48% of Watauga County students have **parents with no college degree** (either 2- or 4-year) versus 59% in peer counties.

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Watauga County, 2021



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

Success of Watauga County High School Graduates

Top destinations of graduates, 2016-2020

- 50% of college-goers attended a **public 4-year college**
 - 13% of college-goers attended a **private 4-year college**
 - 37% of college-goers attended a **public 2-year college**
 - <5% of college-goers attended a **private 2-year college**
 - 83% of college-goers attended an **in-state college**
- 81% of students who enroll **persist to their second year** versus 73% in peer counties. 2021
 - 68% of students who enroll **earn a degree or credential** within 6 years versus 55% in peer counties. 2021

Adult Learners

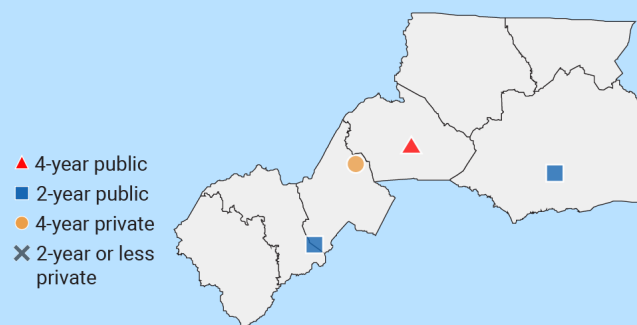
Watauga County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, 2021

- 24 Basic Skills
- 419 Continuing Education
- 819 Curriculum



19% of Watauga County residents have **student loan debt**; 4% of debt holders had **student loans in default**. 2020

Postsecondary assets in Boone-Wilkesboro Prosperity Zone sub-region



Degree Credentials Awarded, 2021

1,077 certificate | 547 associate | 4,433 bachelor's

In your Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

84.0%

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

Top areas of misalignment:

- Health Science** (below and above bachelor's)
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics** (below bachelor's)
- Business Management & Administration** (bachelor's)

17 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2020

UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

- 5,202 graduates in 2020
- 69% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
- \$44,421 annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs)

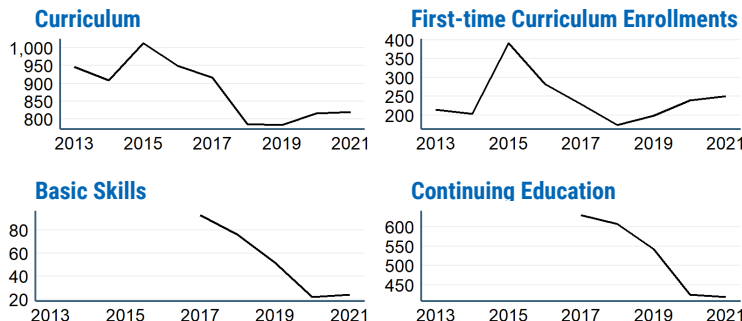
In 2021 your Workforce Development Board served:

- 3,616 in Basic Services
- 1,617 in Career Services
- 245 in Education Services

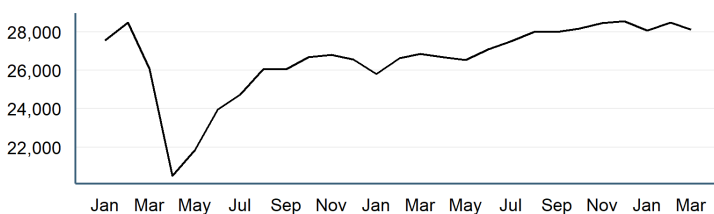


5.7% of young adults ages 16-24 in Watauga County were **not working and not in school** versus 15.2% in peer counties. 2019

Impact of Covid-19 on NC Community College Enrollment



Number of Watauga 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 Watauga County has been meeting local needs:

https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Watauga

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

dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/