

McDowell County

myFutureNC 2024 Attainment Profiles



Hickory
Prosperity Zone Sub-Region
Peer County Type: Rural - Non-Metro
Local Education Agencies: 1 (2023)
Charter Schools: 0 (2023)

2030 Proposed McDowell County Attainment Goal: 5,871 (Stretch Goal: 5,972)

2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

Population Spotlight

2020 Census: 44,577
2022 Estimate: 44,753
Change: 176

Growth Rate

0.4% County vs. 2.5% State



\$54,042
Median Household Income (2022)
State: \$67,516



73%
Home Owners (2022)
State: 67%



18.7%
Child Poverty Rate (2022)
State: 17.2%



18.2%
Opportunity Youth Rate (2022)
State: 10.9%



55%
Households with Broadband (2022)
State: 77%



3.5%
Unemployment Rate (2022)
State: 3.7%

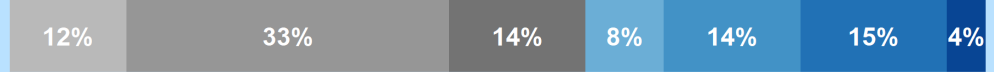
Educational Attainment

McDowell County residents ages 25-44, 2022

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 or Credential
6,407
59.2%

Have Degree or Credential
4,414
40.8%



Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Top Opportunities for Growth

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



FAFSA Completion

49% of McDowell County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the rural - non-metro county average of 61%.



High School Graduation

84% of McDowell County 9th graders complete high school in 4 years or less, below the rural - non-metro county average of 85%.



Chronic Absenteeism

30% of McDowell County students are chronically absent from school, above the rural - non-metro county average of 29%.

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 McDowell County has been meeting local needs:

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

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

In Hickory Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

70.2%

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

Top areas of misalignment:

Health Science bachelor's and below bachelor's
Business Management & Administration bachelor's
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics below bachelor's

359 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2020

UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

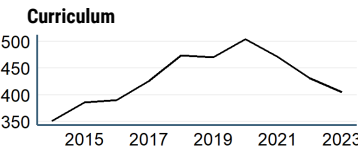
2,139 graduates in 2020
80% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
\$37,952 annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs)

43% of adults (ages 25-44) in McDowell County earned a family sustaining wage, 2022

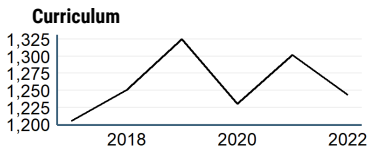
McDowell County is served by:

Foothills Workforce Development Board
Foothills Regional Commission

UNC System College Enrollment



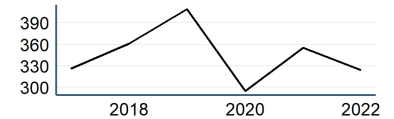
NC Community College Enrollment



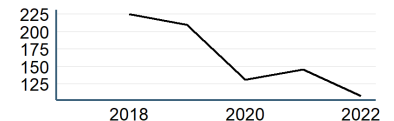
Top 3 Five-Star Jobs in Hickory Prosperity Zone Sub-Region

Job Title	Annual Growth
Nurse Practitioners	4%
Logisticians	3%
Physician Assistants	3%

First-time Curriculum Enrollments



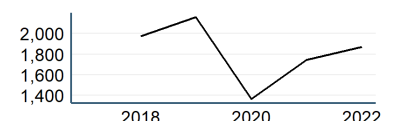
Basic Skills



Top 3 Employers in McDowell County

Employer	Employment Range
Baxter Healthcare Corp	1000+
NC Public Schools	500-999
County Of McDowell	250-499

Continuing Education



Adult Learners

Hickory Sub-Prosperity Zone post-secondary enrollments in NC Community Colleges, Fall 2022

- 478 Basic Skills
- 8,660 Continuing Education
- 1,924 Curriculum

10% of McDowell County residents have **student loan debt**; 10% of debt holders had **student loans in default**. 2022

Success of McDowell County High School Graduates

- 81% of students who enroll **persist to their second year** versus 78% in peer counties. 2022
- 57% of students who enroll **earn a degree or certificate** within 6 years versus 55% in peer counties. 2022

Top destinations of all college-goers, Fall 2023

- 1,661 of all college-goers attended **McDowell TCC**
- 190 of all college-goers attended **Asheville-Buncombe TCC**
- 142 of all college-goers attended **Western Piedmont CC**

- 49% of seniors **completed the FAFSA** in 2023, compared to 62% statewide; 103 more need to complete in 2023 to meet state goal of 80%. 2023
- 53% of graduates reported **intentions to enroll** in a postsecondary institution versus 68% in peer counties. 2022
- 53% of graduates **enrolled in a postsecondary institution** within 12 months versus 52% in peer counties. 2022

57% of McDowell County students have **parents with no college degree** (either 2- or 4-year) versus 55% in peer counties.

How students in McDowell County traditional schools are doing:

- McDowell County has met the goal for **Pre-K enrollment**. (Goal: 75%). 2023
- 27% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in **reading**, compared to 30% statewide; 1,495 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. 2023
- 30% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in **math**, compared to 35% statewide; 1,413 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. 2023
- 84% of 9th graders **graduate within four years**, compared to 87% statewide; 50 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. 2023
- 30% of students are **chronically absent from school**, compared to 27% statewide; 1,073 less needed to meet state goal of 11%. 2023

McDowell County has a **student-to-school counselor ratio** of 287:1 versus 325:1 in peer counties. 2023

3% of students **drop out of high school** (54 total students), compared to 2% statewide. 2023

Degree Credentials Awarded, 2022

1,720 certificate | 2,199 associate | 327 bachelor's

Postsecondary assets in Hickory Prosperity Zone sub-region

Public, 4-year or above

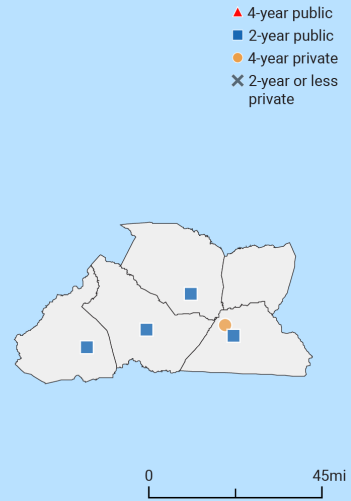
Public, 2-year

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Catawba Valley Community College, McDowell Technical Community College, Western Piedmont Community College

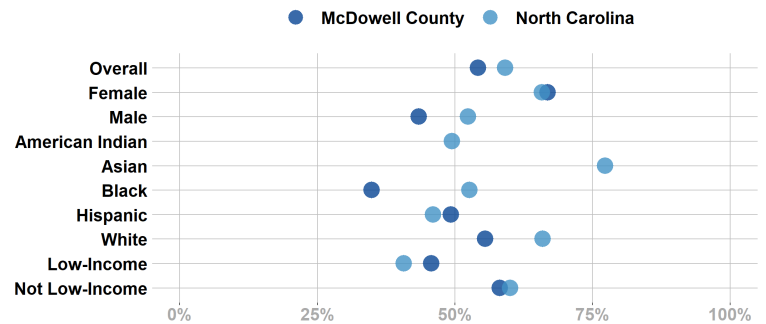
Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above

Lenoir-Rhyne University

Private not-for-profit, 2-year



Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in McDowell County, 2022

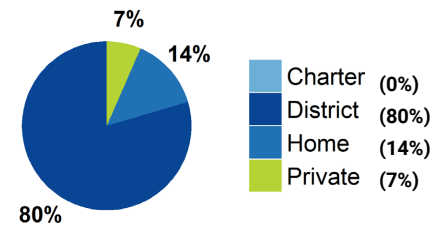


Note: Outcomes for groups with less than 10 students, <5% or >95% are not displayed.

School Choice

6,925 total students were enrolled in K-12 in McDowell County in the 2022-23 school year.

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



Access to Postsecondary Credits

Students in McDowell County completed 2,376 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials (319 (13%) were industry-valued credentials) and 251 concentrations in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security; Manufacturing; and Arts, Audio/Video Technology, & Communications.

132 high school students took at least one **AP test** (7%) versus 8% in peer counties (2023).

209 high school students participated in **Career & College Promise programs** (56%) versus 51% in peer counties (2023).

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

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