

Caldwell County

myFutureNC 2025 Attainment Profiles



Hickory
Prosperity Zone Sub-Region
Peer County Type: Rural - Metro

Educational Attainment

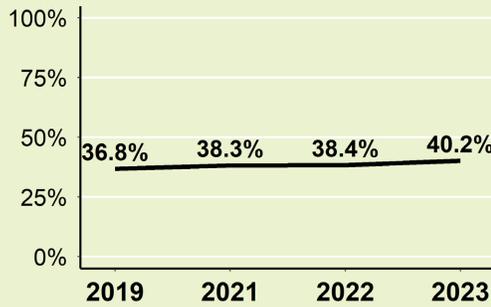
Caldwell County residents ages 25-44, 2023

Have Degree or Credential
7,081
40.2%

No Degree
10,519
59.8%

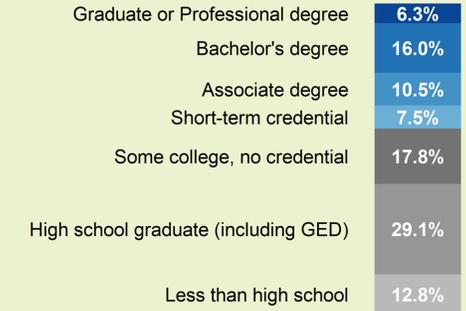
Residents Ages 25-44
17,600

Educational Attainment Trend



Note: 2020 data not shown due to inconsistency

Educational Level Breakdown, 2023



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

2030 Proposed Caldwell County Attainment Goal: 10,959 (Stretch Goal: 11,149)

2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

Population Spotlight

2020 Census: 80,678
2023 Estimate: 80,574
Change: -104

Growth Rate

-0.1% vs. 3.8%
County State

Race/Ethnicity

Amer. Indian 0.1%
Asian/Pac. Isl. 0.6%
Black 4.1%
Hispanic 6.4%
Multiracial 3.1%
White 85.7%



\$56,239
Median Household Income (2023)
State: \$70,838



74.0%
Home Owners (2023)
State: 66.3%



64.5%
Households with Broadband (2023)
State: 77.1%



18.5%
Child Poverty Rate (2023)
State: 17.6%



19.4%
Single Parent Households (2023)
State: 17.0%



3.3%
Foreign Born (2023)
State: 9.2%

Top Opportunities for Growth



Opportunity Youth

19% of Caldwell County youth ages 16-24 are not working and not in school, above the rural - metro county average of 15%.

In Hickory Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

68.3%

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

Top Misalignments

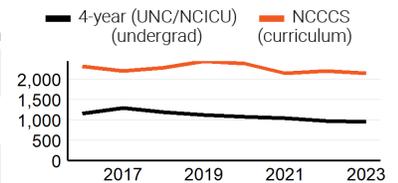
Job Openings vs. Degrees/Credentials

- Education & Training Jobs < Creds
- Health Science Jobs > Creds
- Business Management & Administration Jobs > Creds

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

Job Title	Annual Growth
Nurse Practitioners	4.11%
Logisticians	3.20%
Physician Assistants	2.68%

Postsecondary Enrollment for Caldwell County Residents



170 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2023

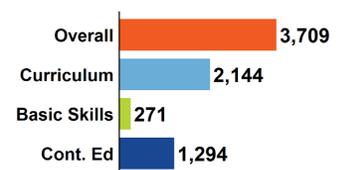
UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

2,139 graduates in 2020
80.0% 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), 2021

Top 3 Employers in Caldwell County

Employer	Employment Range
Merchants Distributors LLC	1000+
Caldwell County Schools	1000+
Rex Healthcare Inc	1000+

Caldwell County residents enrolled in NCCCS, Fall 2023



Top 3 industries in Caldwell County

Industry	Jobs Percent
Manufacturing	5,842 22.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,492 13.5%
Retail Trade	2,851 11.0%

Caldwell County is served by:

- Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board
- Western Piedmont Council of Governments

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

Top Opportunities for Growth



Adult Learners

18% of Caldwell County adults 25-44 have some college, no degree, above the rural - metro county average of 16%.

Degree Credentials Awarded in PZ Sub-Region, 2023

1,394 certificate | 1,970 associate | 380 bachelor's

Adult Learners

Caldwell County Residents Aged 25+ enrolled in NC Community Colleges, Fall 2023

162 Basic Skills
1,157 Continuing Education
468 Curriculum

17.8% of residents (aged 25-44) have some college but no degree. Peer: 16.0% | State: 11.7%, 2023



8.8% of Caldwell County residents have student loan debt. 0.4% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2024

Success of Caldwell County High School Graduates

78.7% of students who enroll persist to their second year.

Peer: 80.1% | State: 83.8%, 2023

92.0% UNC | 65.6% NCCCS | 84.8% NCICU

59.3% of students who enroll earn a degree or certificate within 6 years. Peer: 57.5% | State: 60.0%, 2023

28.9% UNC | 17.5% NCCCS | 9.0% NCICU

Top destinations of all college-goers, 2023

- 2,957 of all college-goers attended Caldwell CC and TI
- 382 of all college-goers attended Catawba Valley CC
- 317 of all college-goers attended Appalachian State University

COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

Top Opportunities for Growth

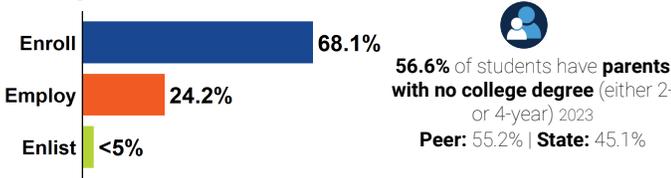


High School Graduation

85% of Caldwell County 9th graders complete high school in 4 years or less, below the rural - metro county average of 86%.

56.0% of 2024 high school class completed the FAFSA as of Sept. 27, 2024. 181 more need to complete in 2024 to meet state goal of 80%. Peer: 52.0% | State: 55.0%

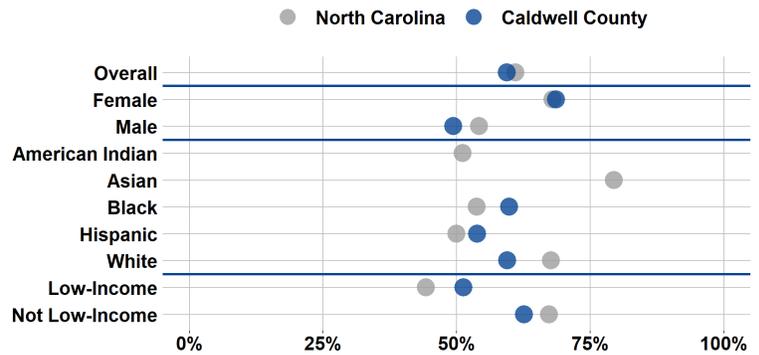
Post High School Graduation Intentions



85.3% of 9th graders graduated within four years. 88 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. Peer: 85.7% | State: 87.3% 2024

57.7% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months. Peer: 52.0% | State: 59.3% 2023

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Caldwell County, 2023



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

ACADEMIC READINESS

Top Opportunities for Growth



Math Performance

32% of Caldwell County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Math, below the state average of 36%.

63.6% of eligible 4-year-olds enrolled in NC Pre-K program in 2024. 54 more needed to meet state goal of 75%. Peer: 61.7% | State: 57.2%

Note: Enrollment numbers only include students served by the NC Pre-K Program and may not represent all Pre-K offerings available.

Caldwell County Traditional Public Schools students:

26.2% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in reading in 2024. 2,192 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. Peer: 25.3% | State: 29.8%

31.8% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in math in 2024. 2,538 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. Peer: 32.3% | State: 36.5%

25.8% of students were chronically absent from school in 2024. 1,603 fewer needed to meet state goal of 11%. Peer: 27.4% | State: 25.7%

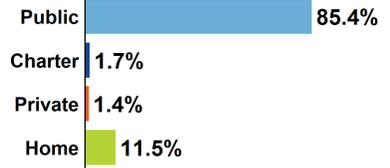
Caldwell County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 320:1 compared to 352:1 in peer counties. 2024

2.3% of students drop out of high school (82 total students), compared to 2.1% statewide. 2023

School & Student Overview (2024 school year)

Traditional Public School District(s): 1
Traditional Public School(s): 25
Charter School(s): 1
Private School(s): 2
Home School(s): 861

12,060 total K-12 students enrolled in schools.



Pathways to College and Career

Students in traditional public schools completed 6,668 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials and 497 concentrations. 1,084 (16.3%) of credentials were industry-valued in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations: Human Services; Health Science; and Architecture and Construction.

211 (6.4%) high school students took at least one AP, IB, or CIE exam. State: 16.8% (2023).

445 (55.7%) high school graduates participated in Career & College Promise programs. State: 36.0% (2024).

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

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