

Cherokee County

myFutureNC 2025 Attainment Profiles



Waynesville-Franklin Prosperity Zone Sub-Region
Peer County Type: Rural - Non-Metro

Educational Attainment

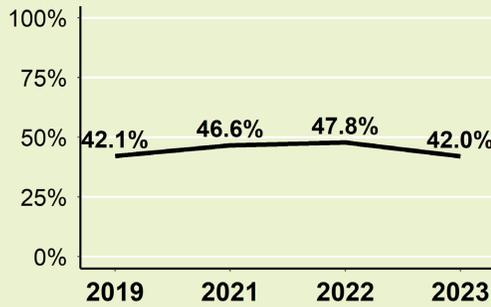
Cherokee County residents ages 25-44, 2023

Have Degree or Credential
2,202
42.0%

No Degree
3,039
58.0%

Residents Ages 25-44
5,241

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 Cherokee County Attainment Goal: 4,455 (Stretch Goal: 4,492)

2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

Population Spotlight

2020 Census: 28,769
2023 Estimate: 29,959
Change: 1,190

Growth Rate

4.1% County vs. 3.8% State

Race/Ethnicity

Amer. Indian 1.6%
Asian/Pac. Isl. 0.5%
Black 1.5%
Hispanic 3.5%
Multiracial 2.6%
White 90.1%

\$53,926
Median Household Income (2023)
State: \$70,838

83.6%
Home Owners (2023)
State: 66.3%

60.5%
Households with Broadband (2023)
State: 77.1%

22.9%
Child Poverty Rate (2023)
State: 17.6%

13.1%
Single Parent Households (2023)
State: 17.0%

1.9%
Foreign Born (2023)
State: 9.2%

Top Opportunities for Growth



Family Sustaining Wage

41% of Cherokee County adults 25-44 earn a family sustaining wage, below the state average of 58%.

In Waynesville-Franklin Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

75.6%

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

Top Misalignments

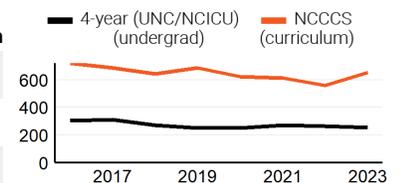
Job Openings vs. Degrees/Credentials

- Health Science Jobs > Creds
- Education & Training Jobs > Creds
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics Jobs < Creds

Top 3 Five-Star Jobs in Waynesville-Franklin Prosperity Zone Sub-Region

Job Title	Annual Growth
Nurse Practitioners	3.67%
Logisticians	3.54%
Medical and Health Services Managers	2.83%

Postsecondary Enrollment for Cherokee County Residents



1 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2023

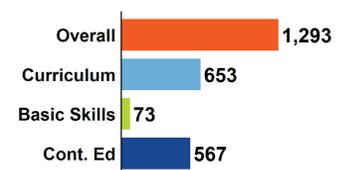
UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

3,111 graduates in 2020
69.4% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
\$41,526 annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs), 2021

Top 3 Employers in Cherokee County

Employer	Employment Range
Murphy Medical Center Inc	250-499
Cherokee County Board of Education	250-499
Cherokee County	250-499

Cherokee County residents enrolled in NCCCS, Fall 2023



Top 3 industries in Cherokee County

Industry	Jobs Percent
Retail Trade	1,460 18.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,383 17.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,000 12.5%

Cherokee County is served by:

- Southwestern Workforce Development Board
- Southwestern Commission

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

Top Opportunities for Growth



Postsecondary Completion

50% of Cherokee County high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education earn a degree or credential within 6 years, below the rural - non-metro county average of 55%.

Degree Credentials Awarded in PZ Sub-Region, 2023

710 certificate | 819 associate | 2,609 bachelor's

Adult Learners

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

35 Basic Skills
452 Continuing Education
137 Curriculum

13.2% of residents (aged 25-44) have some college but no degree. Peer: 15.9% | State: 11.7%, 2023



7.5% of Cherokee County residents have student loan debt. 1.4% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2024

Success of Cherokee County High School Graduates

76.8% of students who enroll persist to their second year.

Peer: 79.6% | State: 83.8%, 2023

81.0% UNC | 67.3% NCCCS | NA NCICU

50.0% of students who enroll earn a degree or certificate within 6 years. Peer: 55.5% | State: 60.0%, 2023

26.2% UNC | 16.5% NCCCS | <5% NCICU

Top destinations of all college-goers, 2023

- 1,154 of all college-goers attended Tri-County CC
- 120 of all college-goers attended Western Carolina University
- 68 of all college-goers attended Southwestern CC

COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

Top Opportunities for Growth

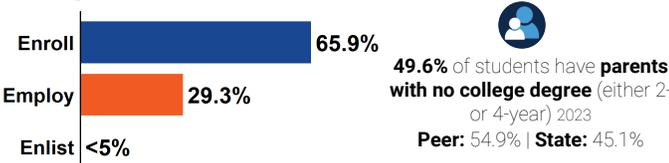


FAFSA Completion

44% of Cherokee County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the rural - non-metro county average of 54%.

44.1% of 2024 high school class completed the FAFSA as of Sept. 27, 2024. 80 more need to complete in 2024 to meet state goal of 80%. Peer: 54.0% | State: 55.0%

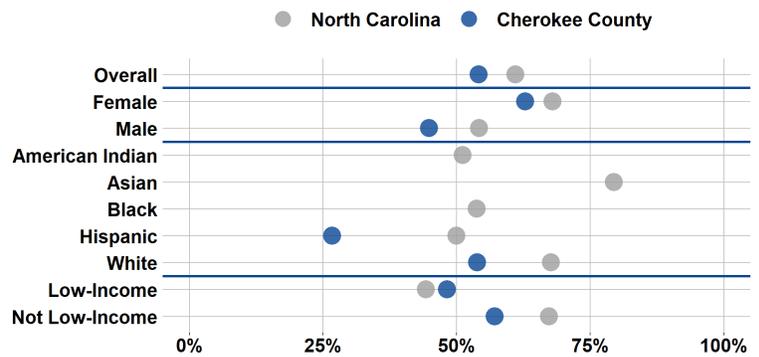
Post High School Graduation Intentions



92.5% of 9th graders graduated within four years. 7 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. Peer: 85.7% | State: 87.3% 2024

52.4% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months. Peer: 52.6% | State: 59.3% 2023

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Cherokee County, 2023



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

ACADEMIC READINESS

Top Opportunities for Growth



Chronic Absenteeism

39% of Cherokee County students are chronically absent from school, above the rural - non-metro county average of 28%.

60.6% of eligible 4-year-olds enrolled in NC Pre-K program in 2024. 14 more needed to meet state goal of 75%. Peer: 71.0% | 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.

Cherokee County Traditional Public Schools students:

28.3% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in reading in 2024. 587 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. Peer: 24.5% | State: 29.8%

30.7% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in math in 2024. 726 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. Peer: 30.3% | State: 36.5%

39.3% of students were chronically absent from school in 2024. 896 fewer needed to meet state goal of 11%. Peer: 27.7% | State: 25.7%

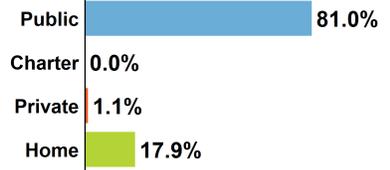
Cherokee County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 207:1 compared to 332:1 in peer counties. 2024

1.0% of students drop out of high school (10 total students), compared to 2.1% statewide. 2023

School & Student Overview (2024 school year)

Traditional Public School District(s): 1
Traditional Public School(s): 13
Charter School(s): 0
Private School(s): 2
Home School(s): 399

3,646 total K-12 students enrolled in schools.



Pathways to College and Career

Students in traditional public schools completed 1,217 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials and 143 concentrations. 338 (27.8%) of credentials were industry-valued in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations: Human Services; Business Management & Administration; and Health Science.

33 (<5%) high school students took at least one AP, IB, or CIE exam. State: 16.8% (2023).

159 (59.6%) 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/