

Clay County

myFutureNC 2025 Attainment Profiles



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

Educational Attainment

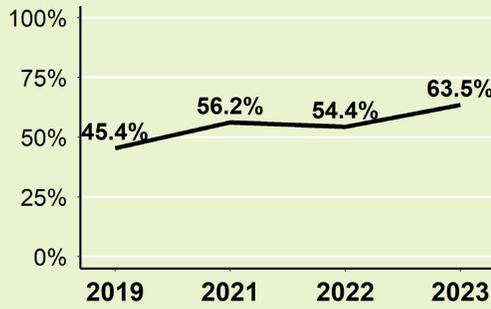
Clay County residents ages 25-44, 2023

Have Degree or Credential
1,264
63.5%

No Degree
726
36.5%

Residents Ages 25-44
1,990

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 Clay County Attainment Goal: 1,376 (Stretch Goal: 1,400)

2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

Population Spotlight

2020 Census: 11,084
2023 Estimate: 11,864
Change: 780

Growth Rate

7.0% vs. **3.8%**
County State

Race/Ethnicity

Amer. Indian 0.9%
Asian/Pac. Isl. 0.8%
Black 1.8%
Hispanic 3.9%
Multiracial 1.2%
White 90.8%



\$53,229
Median Household Income (2023)
State: \$70,838



79.8%
Home Owners (2023)
State: 66.3%



61.4%
Households with Broadband (2023)
State: 77.1%



6.0%
Child Poverty Rate (2023)
State: 17.6%



7.2%
Single Parent Households (2023)
State: 17.0%



3.8%
Foreign Born (2023)
State: 9.2%

Top Opportunities for Growth



Family Sustaining Wage

51% of Clay 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

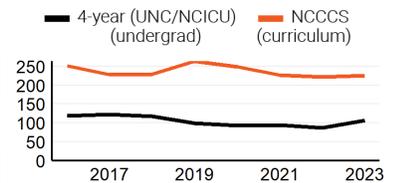
Job Openings vs. Degrees/Credentials

- 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 Clay County Residents



0 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

51.0% of adults (ages 25-44) in Clay County earned a **family sustaining wage**. Peer: 40.5% | State: 57.6%, 2023

4.8% of youth (ages 16-24) in Clay County were **Opportunity Youth**. Peer: 13.8% | State: 10.3%, 2023

78.9% of adults (ages 25-44) in Clay County **participated in the labor force**. Peer: 78.3% | State: 84.2%, 2023

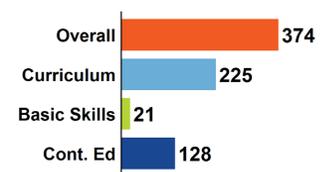
Top 3 Employers in Clay County

Employer	Employment Range
Clay County Board of Education	250-499
County of Clay	100-249
Ingles Markets Inc	100-249

Top 3 industries in Clay County

Industry	Jobs Percent
Retail Trade	444 20.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	293 13.3%
Educational Services	257 11.7%

Clay County residents enrolled in NCCCS, Fall 2023



Clay County is served by:

- Southwestern Workforce Development Board
- Southwestern Commission

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

Top Opportunities for Growth



Postsecondary Completion

69% of Clay County high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education earn a degree or credential within 6 years, below the state goal of 80%.

Degree Credentials Awarded in PZ Sub-Region, 2023

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

Adult Learners

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

- 9 Basic Skills
- 107 Continuing Education
- 50 Curriculum

10.7% of residents (aged 25-44) have some college but no degree. Peer: 15.9% | State: 11.7%, 2023



8.9% of Clay County residents have student loan debt, NA of debt holders had student loans in default, 2024

Success of Clay County High School Graduates

85.7% of students who enroll persist to their second year.

Peer: 79.6% | State: 83.8%, 2023

94.1% UNC | 71.4% NCCCS | NA NCICU

69.0% of students who enroll earn a degree or certificate within 6 years. Peer: 55.5% | State: 60.0%, 2023

31.0% UNC | 16.7% NCCCS | <5% NCICU

Top destinations of all college-goers, 2023

- 329 of all college-goers attended Tri-County CC
- 51 of all college-goers attended Western Carolina University
- 23 of all college-goers attended Appalachian State University

COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

Top Opportunities for Growth

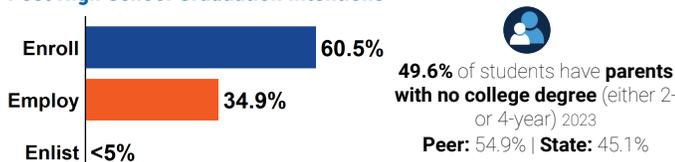


FAFSA Completion

48% of Clay County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the rural - non-metro county average of 54%.

48.2% of 2024 high school class completed the FAFSA as of Sept. 27, 2024. 26 more need to complete in 2024 to meet state goal of 80%. Peer: 54.0% | State: 55.0%

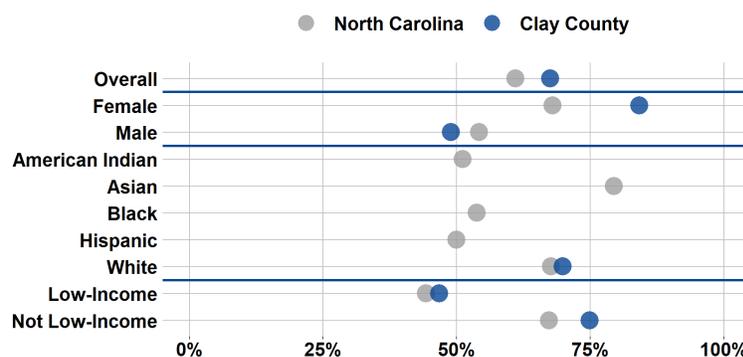
Post High School Graduation Intentions



87.9% of 9th graders graduated within four years. 7 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. Peer: 85.7% | State: 87.3% 2024

65.8% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months. Peer: 52.6% | State: 59.3% 2023

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Clay 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

29% of Clay County students are chronically absent from school, above the rural - non-metro county average of 28%.

Clay County has met the goal for Pre-K enrollment (Goal: 75%). Peer: 71.0% | State: 57.2% 2024

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

Clay County Traditional Public Schools students:

33.9% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in reading in 2024. 218 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. Peer: 24.5% | State: 29.8%

39.1% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in math in 2024. 261 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. Peer: 30.3% | State: 36.5%

29.1% of students were chronically absent from school in 2024. 234 fewer needed to meet state goal of 11%. Peer: 27.7% | State: 25.7%

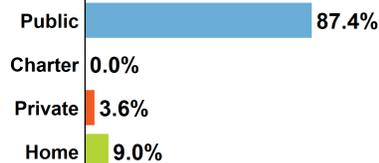
Clay County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 310:1 compared to 332:1 in peer counties, 2024

2.2% of students drop out of high school (9 total students), compared to 2.1% statewide, 2023

School & Student Overview (2024 school year)

Traditional Public School District(s): 1
Traditional Public School(s): 4
Charter School(s): 0
Private School(s): 2
Home School(s): 68

1,411 total K-12 students enrolled in schools.



Pathways to College and Career

Students in traditional public schools completed 533 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials and 76 concentrations. 84 (15.8%) of credentials were industry-valued in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations: Health Science; Business Management & Administration; and Human Services.

15 (<5%) high school students took at least one AP, IB, or CIE exam. State: 16.8% (2023).

46 (51.1%) 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/