

Polk County

myFutureNC 2025 Attainment Profiles



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

Educational Attainment

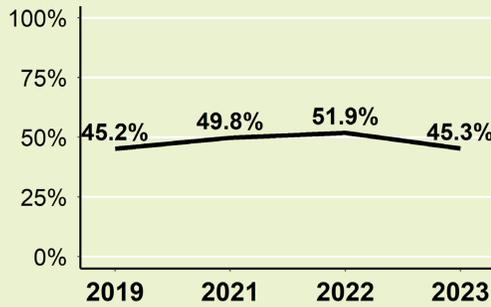
Polk County residents ages 25-44, 2023

Have Degree or Credential
1,663
45.3%

No Degree
2,006
54.7%

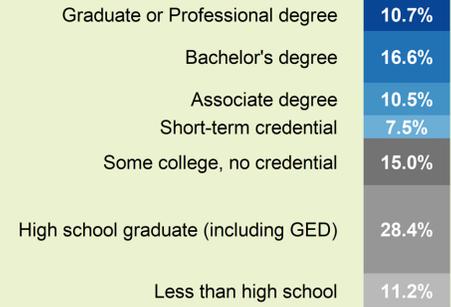
Residents Ages 25-44
3,669

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 Polk County Attainment Goal: 3,478 (Stretch Goal: 3,506)

2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

Population Spotlight

2020 Census: 19,335
2023 Estimate: 20,060
Change: 725

Growth Rate

3.7% vs. 3.8%
County State

Race/Ethnicity

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Amer. Indian | 0.2% |
| Asian/Pac. Isl. | 0.1% |
| Black | 5.1% |
| Hispanic | 5.5% |
| Multiracial | 1.8% |
| White | 87.2% |



\$59,012
Median Household Income (2023)
State: \$70,838



76.6%
Home Owners (2023)
State: 66.3%



62.1%
Households with Broadband (2023)
State: 77.1%



21.5%
Child Poverty Rate (2023)
State: 17.6%



10.0%
Single Parent Households (2023)
State: 17.0%



4.4%
Foreign Born (2023)
State: 9.2%

Top Opportunities for Growth



Opportunity Youth

16% of Polk County youth ages 16-24 are not working and not in school, above the rural - non-metro county average of 14%.

In Asheville Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

67.8%

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

Top Misalignments

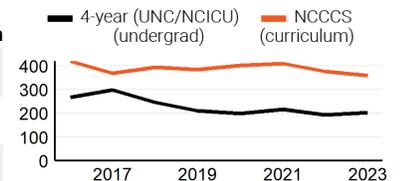
Job Openings vs. Degrees/Credentials

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

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

| Job Title | Annual Growth |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Nurse Practitioners | 4.72% |
| Logisticians | 3.51% |
| Physician Assistants | 3.08% |

Postsecondary Enrollment for Polk County Residents



14 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2023

UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

3,023 graduates in 2020
68.9% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
\$35,824 annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs), 2021

42.7% of adults (ages 25-44) in Polk County earned a **family sustaining wage**. Peer: 40.5% | State: 57.6%, 2023

15.6% of youth (ages 16-24) in Polk County were **Opportunity Youth**. Peer: 13.8% | State: 10.3%, 2023

85.6% of adults (ages 25-44) in Polk County **participated in the labor force**. Peer: 78.3% | State: 84.2%, 2023

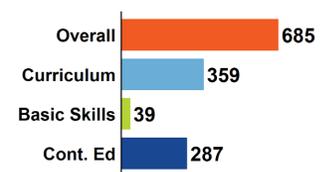
Top 3 Employers in Polk County

| Employer | Employment Range |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| County of Polk | 250-499 |
| Tryon Equestrian Properties LLC | 250-499 |
| St Lukes Hospital Inc | 100-249 |

Top 3 industries in Polk County

| Industry | Jobs Percent |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 1,473 26.5% |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 530 9.5% |
| Educational Services | 443 8.0% |

Polk County residents enrolled in NCCCS, Fall 2023



Polk County is served by:

- Foothills Workforce Development Board
- Foothills Regional Commission

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

Top Opportunities for Growth



First-Year Persistence

75% of Polk County high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education persist to their second year, below the rural - non-metro county average of 80%.

Degree Credentials Awarded in PZ Sub-Region, 2023

1,689 certificate | 1,451 associate | 1,326 bachelor's

Adult Learners

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

- 28 Basic Skills
- 249 Continuing Education
- 75 Curriculum

15.0% of residents (aged 25-44) have some college but no degree. Peer: 15.9% | State: 11.7%, 2023



7.8% of Polk County residents have student loan debt, 3.8% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2024

Success of Polk County High School Graduates

75.5% of students who enroll persist to their second year.

Peer: 79.6% | State: 83.8%, 2023

89.7% UNC | 57.9% NCCCS | 95.0% NCICU

62.6% of students who enroll earn a degree or certificate within 6 years. Peer: 55.5% | State: 60.0%, 2023

27.8% UNC | 19.1% NCCCS | 8.7% NCICU

Top destinations of all college-goers, 2023

- 442 of all college-goers attended Isothermal CC
- 170 of all college-goers attended Blue Ridge CC
- 51 of all college-goers attended Asheville-Buncombe TCC

COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

Top Opportunities for Growth

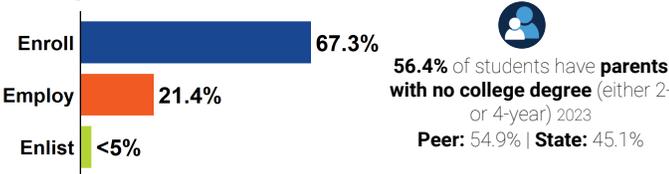


Postsecondary Enrollment

55% of Polk County seniors enroll in postsecondary education within 12 months of graduation, below the state average of 59%.

62.4% of 2024 high school class completed the FAFSA as of Sept. 27, 2024. 25 more need to complete in 2024 to meet state goal of 80%. Peer: 54.0% | State: 55.0%

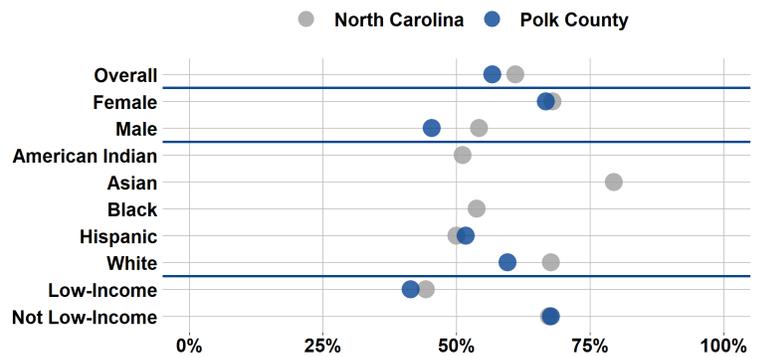
Post High School Graduation Intentions



86.8% of 9th graders graduated within four years. 14 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. Peer: 85.7% | State: 87.3% 2024

55.0% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months. Peer: 52.6% | State: 59.3% 2023

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Polk 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

43% of Polk County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Math, below the state goal of 86%.

Polk 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.

Polk County Traditional Public Schools students:

40.3% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in reading in 2024. 304 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. Peer: 24.5% | State: 29.8%

42.5% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in math in 2024. 404 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. Peer: 30.3% | State: 36.5%

22.0% of students were chronically absent from school in 2024. 237 fewer needed to meet state goal of 11%. Peer: 27.7% | State: 25.7%

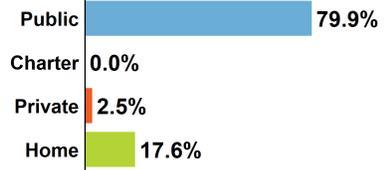
Polk County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 222:1 compared to 332:1 in peer counties. 2024

1.5% 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): 7
 Charter School(s): 0
 Private School(s): 2
 Home School(s): 257

2,518 total K-12 students enrolled in schools.



Pathways to College and Career

Students in traditional public schools completed 996 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials and 141 concentrations. 142 (14.3%) of credentials were industry-valued in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations: Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources; Health Science; and Information Technology.

38 (6.3%) high school students took at least one AP, IB, or CIE exam. State: 16.8% (2023).

95 (65.5%) 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/