Sandhills
Prosperity Zone (PZ)
myFutureNC 2025 Attainment Profiles

Counties in Sandhills PZ:
Bladen, Columbus, Cumberland, Hoke, Montgomery, Moore, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, and Scotland Counties

Sandhills PZ Served By:
Cape Fear, Lumber River, Mid-Carolina, Piedmont Triad, and Central Pines Councils of Governments
and Cape Fear, Lumber River, and Mid-Carolina Workforce Development Boards

Educational Attainment
Sandhills residents ages 25-44, 2023

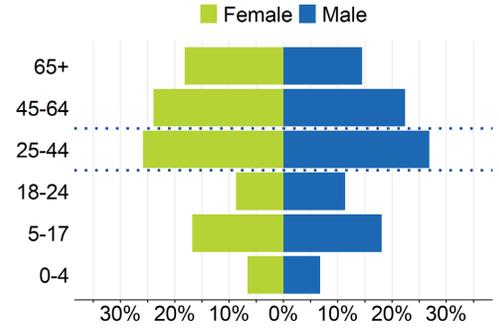**Have Degree or Credential**
98,864
44.1%

No Degree
125,521
55.9%

Residents Ages 25-44
224,385

Educational Level Breakdown, 2023

Level	Percent
Graduate or Professional degree	7.8%
Bachelor's degree	16.9%
Associate degree	11.8%
Short-term credential	7.5%
Some college, no credential	19.2%
High school graduate (including GED)	26.8%
Less than high school	10.0%

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

Age Structure, 2023

Female / Male

Age groups: 65+, 45-64, 25-44, 18-24, 5-17, 0-4
Axis: 30% 20% 10% 0% 10% 20% 30%

2030 Proposed Sandhills Attainment Goal: 121,060

2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

Population Spotlight
2020 Census: 845,241
2023 Estimate: 858,590
Change: 13,349

Growth Rate
1.6% County vs. **3.8%** State

Race/Ethnicity, 2023

Amer. Indian	7.2%
Asian/Pac. Isl.	1.7%
Black	28.9%
Hispanic	11.3%
Multiracial	4.4%
White	45.9%

$60,308 Median Household Income (2023) **State:** $70,838

63.6% Home Owners (2023) **State:** 66.3%

70.0% Households with Broadband (2023) **State:** 77.1%

27.1% Child Poverty Rate (2023) **State:** 17.6%

21.1% Single Parent Households (2023) **State:** 17.0%

5.9% Foreign Born (2023) **State:** 9.2%

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

In Sandhills Prosperity Zone:

77.3%
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
- **Transportation, Distribution & Logistics** Jobs > Creds

1,935 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2023

UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:
7,327 graduates in 2020
59.3% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
$37,602 annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs), 2021

40.6% of adults (ages 25-44) in Sandhills earned a **family sustaining wage. State:** 57.6%, 2023

14.8% of youth (ages 16-24) in Sandhills were **Opportunity Youth. State:** 10.3%, 2023

78.1% of adults (ages 25-44) in Sandhills **participated in the labor force. State:** 84.2%, 2023

Top Industries in Sandhills PZ, 2024 Q2

Industry Name	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages
Health Care and Social Assistance	54,597	$1,125
Retail Trade	36,567	$628
Manufacturing	36,354	$1,126
Accommodation and Food Services	30,570	$402
Public Administration	26,248	$1,236

Top Job Sectors in Sandhills PZ, 2024 Q2

Job Sector	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages
Private	223,049	$900
Local Government	41,609	$1,039
Federal Government	16,515	$1,589
State Government	10,709	$1,123

CAROLINA DEMOGRAPHY

myFUTURENC 2 million by 2030

John M Belk Endowment — ELEVATE THROUGH EDUCATION

UNC CAROLINA POPULATION CENTER

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

Degree Credentials Awarded in PZ, 2023

2,577 certificate | **3,527** associate | **2,905** bachelor's

Adult Learners
Sandhills Residents Aged 25+ enrolled in NC Community Colleges, Fall 2023

2,149 Basic Skills
13,421 Continuing Education
7,273 Curriculum

19.2% of residents (aged 25-44) **have some college but no degree. State:** 11.7%, 2023

Success of Sandhills High School Graduates

81.3% of students who enroll **persist to their second year. State:** 83.8%, 2023

89.7% UNC | **72.7%** NCCCS | **78.6%** NCICU

52.8% of students who enroll **earn a degree or certificate** within 6 years. **State:** 60.0%, 2023

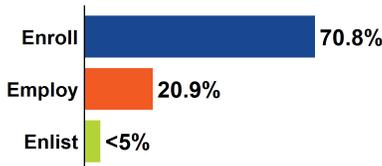**28.7%** UNC | **14.9%** NCCCS | **<5%** NCICU

Top destinations of all college-goers, 2024
- **14,748** of all college-goers attended **Fayetteville TCC**
- **5,940** of all college-goers attended **Sandhills CC**
- **4,930** of all college-goers attended **Robeson CC**

COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

57.7% of 2024 high school class **completed the FAFSA** as of Sept. 27, 2024. 1,859 more need to complete in 2024 to meet state goal of **80%. State:** 55.0%
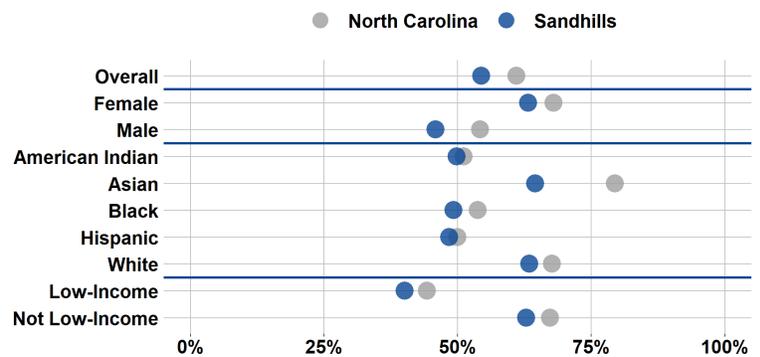
Post High School Graduation Intentions, 2023

Enroll **70.8%**
Employ **20.9%**
Enlist **<5%**

85.2% of 9th graders **graduated within four years.** 1,030 more needed to meet state goal of **95%. State:** 87.3% 2024

52.7% of graduates **enrolled in a postsecondary institution** within 12 months. **State:** 59.3% 2023

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Sandhills, 2023

● North Carolina ● Sandhills

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

ACADEMIC READINESS

61.5% of eligible 4-year-olds **enrolled in NC Pre-K program** in 2024. 854 more needed to meet state goal of **75%. State:** 57.2%

Sandhills Traditional Public Schools students:

23.9% of 3-8 graders **earned college-and-career-ready scores in reading** in 2024. 35,415 more needed to meet state goal of **86%. State:** 29.8%

26.9% of 3-8 graders **earned college-and-career-ready scores in math** in 2024. 26,305 more needed to meet state goal of **73%. State:** 36.5%
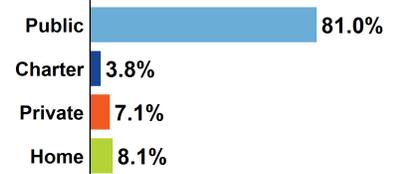
31.5% of students were **chronically absent from school** in 2024. 27,677 fewer needed to meet state goal of **11%. State:** 25.7%

2.1% of students **drop out of high school** (842 total students), compared to **2.1%** statewide. 2023

School & Student Overview (2024 school year)

Traditional Public School District(s): 12
Traditional Public School(s): 247
Charter School(s): 13
Private School(s): 87
Home School(s): 7,641

Public **81.0%**
Charter **3.8%**
Private **7.1%**
Home **8.1%**

155,687 total K-12 students enrolled in schools.

Pathways to College and Career

Students in traditional public schools completed **42,382 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials and 7,062 concentrations. 5,832 (13.8%) of credentials were industry-valued** in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations: Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources; Health Science; and Human Services.

3,462 (9.0%) high school students took at least one **AP, IB, or CIE exam. State:** 16.8% (2023).

3,993 (43.1%) 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/

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